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RESOLUTIONS:
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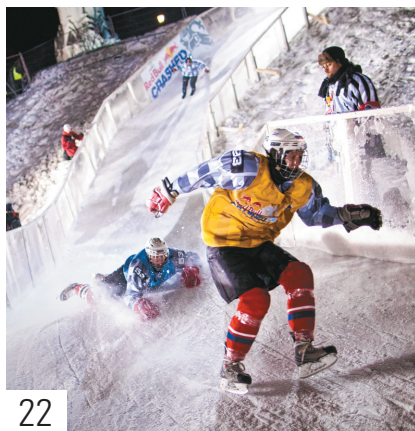
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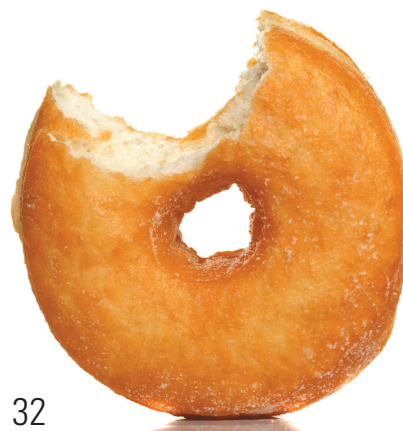


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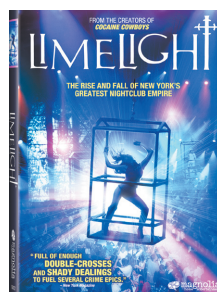


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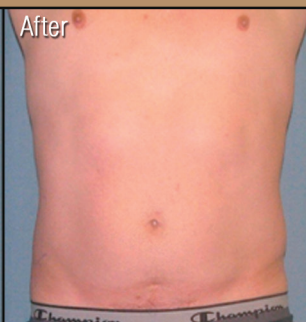
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Happy New Year.

WHAT A year it will be.

While resolutions are on our minds and thoughts stray to the past, I can't help but think about where we've come from, where we are, and where we're going. The holidays were a time when, I hope, our readers found tidings of joy rather than shame, fear, or closets...but I know that expectations need to be realistic and I'm sure that going home wasn't a pleasant option or experience for everyone. I thought about home as I was at the "Center Stage: Home for the Holidays" fundraising event for Minnesotans United for All Families last month (photos on 12-13).

Watching the crowd at the Center Stage event at the Cowles Center, there was a diversity in appearances—whether ages or genders or apparel or skin color be the case—and there was a comfort. An ease. A normal. The performers and their acts were everything we expect from performers from the local stages—talent and excellence. The content varied from songs and dances to drama, spoken word, comedy, and drag.

One of the more surprisingly poignant parts of the show happened when Miss Richfield 1981 asked all the same-sex couples in the audience to stand up. Then, increment by increment, she had them sit down...those who had been together 5, 10, 15 years until fewer were standing, but had been together for over twenty years. More, even. The house lights were up and we could see who they were. We applauded. I felt chills and warmth all at once.

As I looked at the couples, I had another thought: There are people I know who don't believe you exist. Looking around the theater, I thought: They don't believe in you, either. You as a couple. You as a single. You as a gay man. You as a lesbian. You as a bisexual. You as not even knowing how you'd identify. It was a sinking feeling. The realization after the high. Where'd it come from? Nowhere far.

Thinking to numerous recent conversations I've had with people who may keep rather narrow circles, they're still asking me for scientific proof that homosexuality is natural—which doesn't even get into anything like gender identity or the like. It's strictly surface and rather elementary, but that's where they are. Words like hippocampus and hypothalamus come up. Genes. Chromosomes. Nature versus nurture. Choice or not. It's a place that we may consider, but we don't stay there. We don't put down roots in the curiosity—because we don't base whether or not GLBT people exist, or should exist, on the answer to the question.

Why don't we? Because we are them. All around us, wherever we fall in the GLBT or A community, we're there. We know we exist because we exist. It doesn't take much more faith than that, usually. I see you, you see you, we see each other. Our versions of homosexuality and sexual identity are from personal experience, rather than from television or "that one guy" we knew.

After the show, I walked away from the Cowles Center and toward my parking ramp in City Center. As I crossed Hennepin and continued on the sidewalk, I heard a man say gently, "Hey, girl."

I looked. I think it's the naïveté in me that makes me look every time...not very street-smart at 11:00 at night on Hennepin. A tall man carrying a grocery bag was strolling toward me. Behind a beard and a scarf I recognized my childhood friend, Aaron, the only person in the history of my time in high school who was ever unabashedly out. The one who was teased mercilessly both for his way of being as well as his ability to act like any high school boy or girl can, rather dramatic and somewhat needling. He's wickedly smart and for a long time after high school I worried where he got swallowed up by the city and if he'd been spit out. He's from home and many of us from home aren't ready for what greets us outside of it. It's scary, it's unknown, it's yet uncharted...by us at any rate. That night, he was simply walking home to Boom Island with his groceries. Very urban, very normal.

Thankfully, we'd caught up in the recent months, sharing our stories and lives and even celebrating my new job. At the time, it occurred to me that he was the most coincidental person to run across that night after that event. The thoughts still racing in my head, I ran them past him. I asked him what he thought about it—that people at home don't necessarily believe that gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered people actually exist, or should exist. He very calmly and peacefully responded in agreement, but not necessarily with as much militance as I was exuding.

He may be ambivalent. He may be more forgiving. He may want nothing to do with them. I don't know.

The people who implicitly or explicitly question whether or not homosexuals exist are more numerous and intelligent than we might think. If we're wondering how we're going to win this fight against the anti-marriage amendment in November, they're wondering why they have to vote on something that doesn't exist. Or shouldn't be made to seem like it does exist, because it doesn't without proof. There are many fights this year—and this rather hidden one can't be underestimated. The people who tell us to our faces that they'll vote for the amendment to make sure the abominations aren't given equal rights may not be the ones to worry about as much. The people who are rational and even contemplating the questions of origin are the ones to pay attention to.

The ones that we have to be the proof to.

People who are not near us or in a more densely populated and diverse area may not have that similar awareness. Oh, yes. It's a slippery slope to do anything so stupid as to pit city folk against country folk. That's underestimating all of us. But, there's something to be said for not only being exposed to people who are different, but



Continued on page 53

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"KNOWING THYSELF," and "Making New Year's Resolutions" create something of an oxymoron. You already know your batting average with Resolutions—your avoirdupois of yesteryear still clings as tenaciously as barnacles on a rusty, sunken hull.

Your dilatory attendance at the gym, the Norwegian sweater project that foundered on the first reindeer, the non-completion of your great first novel, indicate 2012's Resolutions are not slated to happen, either. Unless you heed my advice.

How, you ask, does one set a few life-enhancing goals for the New Year and stick to them?

First internalize, "I will," not "I want." "Small is good." "Less is more," and keep these verities in mind when picking your battles. "I want" is mere wishing. We all wish and want. I want to win the Powerball, but no one's listening.

After absorbing the above phrases, create a habit around the Resolution you're about to embrace. For example: "I will lose some weight." Not "I want to lose weight;" not "I will lose 30 pounds;" Both recipes for failure. "Will" and "some" are the operative words.

Resuscitate your languishing gym membership. Go every day, whether you break a sweat or not. It will become a habit. You will realize how foolish it is to waste gas to drive miles for nothing, and eventually you'll do something—anything. Notice that on some machines, you can read a book and pretend you are not exercising. Any time you spend on the machines or swimming, you will at least not be eating.

By dint of not having food at hand (if you habitually tote a meatball sub and vanilla malted, read no further), you will eventually lose a few ounces, a pound, two, and will have fulfilled your New Year's Resolution (Remember? "I will lose some weight.")

Success, and the habit of regularity you've created, may well lead you to become more ambitious in your exercise program, and further weight loss, and realization that these techniques are applicable to knitting reindeer and writing novels as well.

Note I say, "May well lead..." If I could follow my own advice, I'd not only be buff, but you'd have already read my brilliant first novel and I'd be at the keyboard in my hand-crafted sweater, typing, typing, typing. ■

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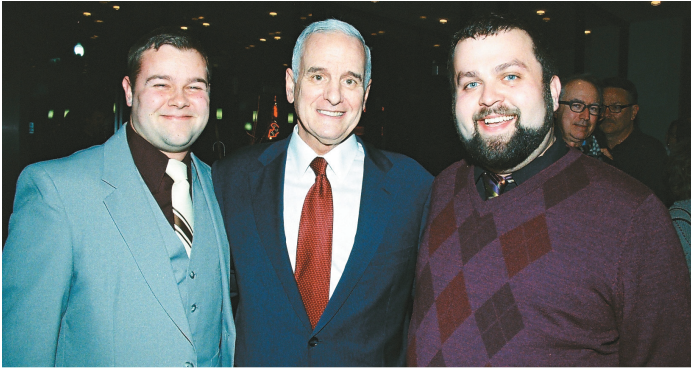
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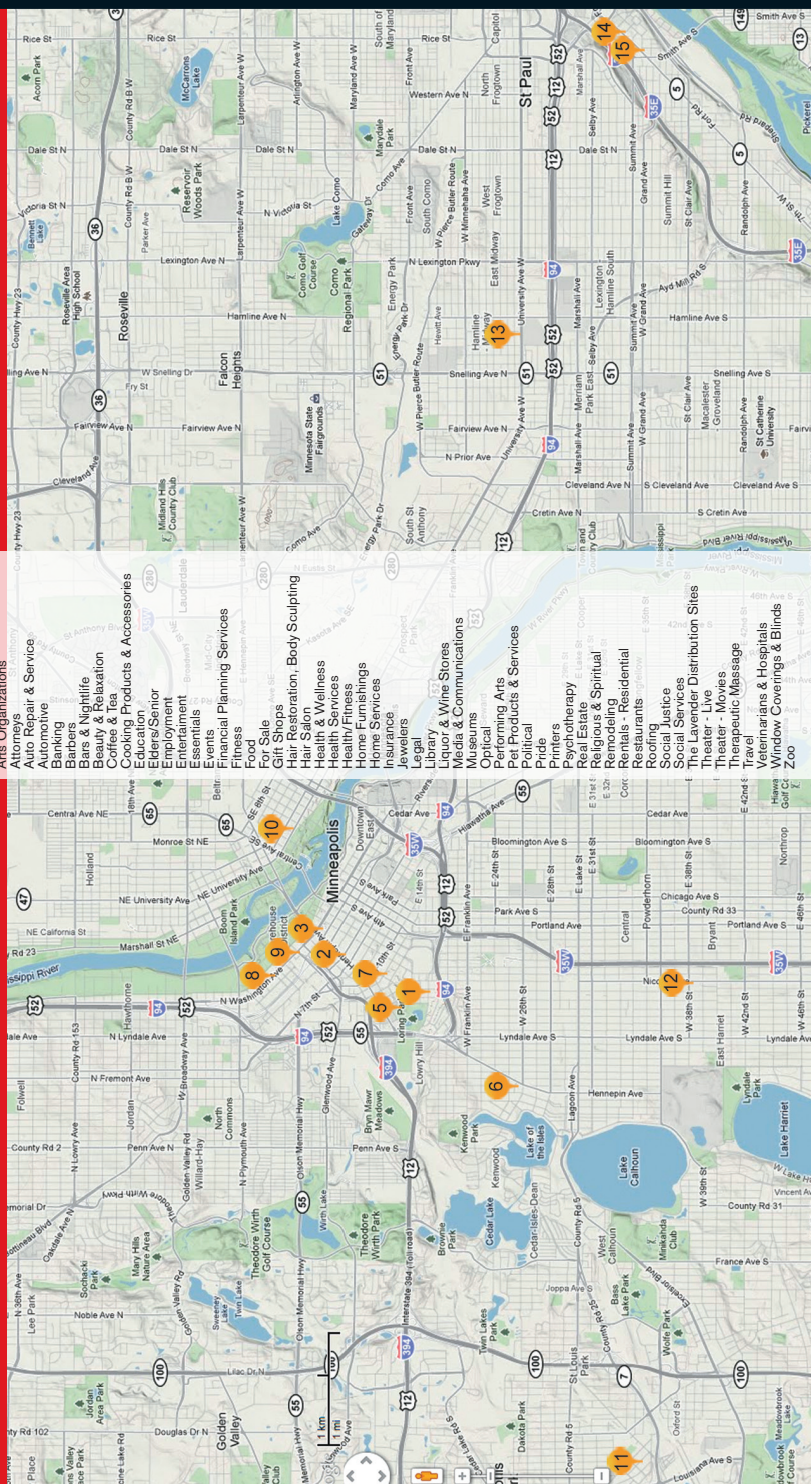


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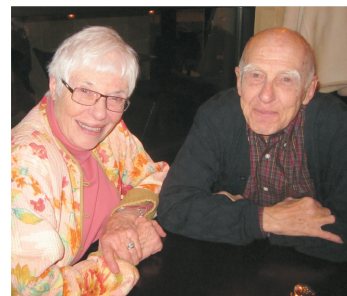
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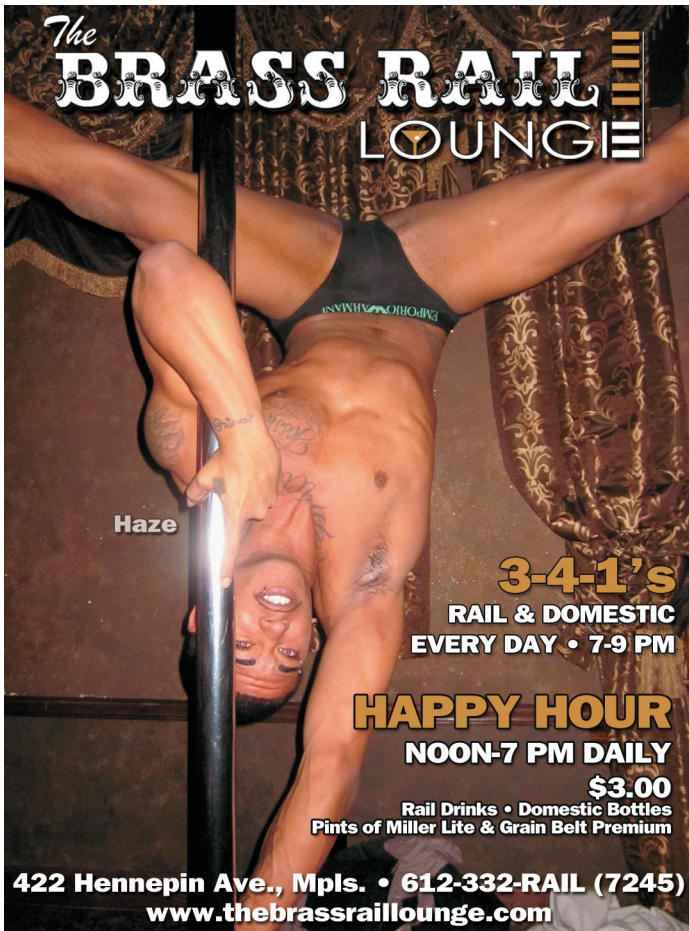
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One Voice Showcases BraveSouls & Dreamers

One Voice Mixed Chorus, Minnesota's gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender (GLBT) and straight allies chorus, opens its 2011-2012 season with *BraveSouls & Dreamers*, a new One Voice Commission by Robert Seeley and Robert Espindola. This inspirational concert celebrates the lives of visionary leaders who have challenged prejudice and violence, including Harvey Milk, Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, Judy Shepard. Also featured is music by Bob Dylan, Holly Near, and Stephen Sondheim.

One Voice Artistic Director Jane Ramseyer Miller talked recently with Lavender about the upcoming program and about the Chorus itself.

When did the One Voice Mixed Chorus get its start? How has it grown to be the largest GLBT chorus in North America?

One Voice Mixed Chorus was formed in 1988—one of the first choruses in the country to bring together men and women from the GLBT and allied communities with the intent to unite for a common goal of creating social change through music. The gay and lesbian communities had already begun working together to address the AIDS crisis, which had reached astronomical proportions, and it was clear that further social change was needed.

Today, One Voice is the largest GLBTA chorus in North America. It is comprised of 100 men and women of diverse cultural backgrounds, from ages 17 to 75, drawn together as members and allies of the GLBT community. Being a member of One Voice is a profound experience for many members, affecting their sense of identity and connection to community.

One Voice started growing significantly when we began focusing on our mission of social change in addition to musical excellence. Over 12 years ago, we began taking our music and message of social change into schools around the Twin Cities, and found that these performances had a profound impact on our singers as well as on the schools where we perform. Our outreach is a clear part of our identity and draws many singers into the chorus.

One Voice could not exist without the efforts of its "Fifth-Section," or the non-singing volunteers [in addition to Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass], who are a crucial part of the chorus and who contribute 4,000 to 5,000 volunteer hours annually. Our Fifth-Section



Jane Ramseyer Miller.
Photo Courtesy of One Voice Mixed Chorus

members do everything from ushering to baking cookies, bookkeeping, web-design and all of our ticket management. Together, we dedicate our time and energy to the One Voice mission: "Building community and creating social change by raising our voices in song."

How long have you been Artistic Director? Can you give a bit of your background?

I am in my 17th year as Artistic Director for One Voice Mixed Chorus, and currently serve as Artistic Director in Residence for GALA Choruses. I hold a Masters of Music in Choral Conducting from the University of Minnesota and a BA in Psychology from the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada. I've served as Music Director for several church choirs as well as for TransVoices,

Calliope Women's Chorus, Fierra Voce Femmina, and Voices for Peace—a multi-cultural youth choir.

I especially enjoy creative community collaborations, and have created choral music with 15-Head Theater Lab, The Women's Cancer Resource Center, Shakopee Women's Correctional Facility, In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre, Kairos Dance Theatre, Mu Daiko, Teens Rock the Mic and District 202 among others. My compositions are published by Yelton Rhodes Music and Pilgrim Press.

In 2008 I received the GALA Choruses Legacy Award for conducting, innovative programming and commitment to community outreach, and in 2010 was awarded the ACDA VocalEssence Award for Creative Programming and the ACDA Minnesota Advocate for Choral Excellence (ACE) Award. GALA's Artistic Artist in Residence.

17 years is a long time for any conductor to survive a community chorus! I think my longevity is due to the strong and compelling mission of One Voice that is visible in every performance and in every community setting where we perform. The chorus has continued to grow artistically stronger every year and I am delighted with One Voice's programming and sound as we enter our 25th anniversary in 2012!

Tell us more about *BraveSouls & Dreamers*.

BraveSouls & Dreamers was first composed for the Portland Gay Men's Chorus. We have worked with the composer to create a new arrangement of the piece for

mixed chorus (men and women). This will be the premier of this arrangement and we're really excited to bring *BraveSouls* to the Twin Cities. Because the original was written only for men's voices this arrangement will sound significantly different than the original.

The new arrangement is set for SATB [Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass] chorus, four soloists and a small orchestra with winds, harp, piano, synthesizer and percussion. We have four amazing soloists who are playing

the parts of Mother, Sage and two Soldiers. Their voices really add to the power and compelling nature of the music and text.

Is OVation a part of One Voice or a different entity?

OVation is the portable version of One Voice—a small ensemble of eight singers that can bring our music and our message almost anywhere. Over the course of the year, OVation presents roughly 10-15 performances, with One Voice or on its own, at venues ranging from the Minnesota State Fair, Pride, the Minnesota Arboretum... even the Minnesota Liver Foundation!

What is, in your opinion, the most outstanding effect that One Voice has on the community?

Definitely our outreach to greater Minnesota and One Voice's concerts in schools have had a huge impact in the community. Each fall we rent buses and take our music on the road with 80-90 singers and Fifth-Section members in tow. This past November we performed a concert with Duluth United for All Families in support of their work around the marriage amendment.

On January 9 we are performing a concert in St. Francis, about a hour north of the Twin Cities with 100 youth from St. Francis High School. We rehearsed with these youth in November on our way to Duluth. In these settings there is always a bit of nervousness when we first meet with our chorus and a bunch of youth jammed into risers. But once we started singing it was like the fear and nervousness completely evaporated as 200 voices (youth and adults) filled the room.

We understand you have a new Executive Director?

Craig Coogan, who recently joined the One Voice staff as Executive Director, is an expert in developing strategies and programs to help GLBTA and other nonprofit organizations achieve their operational and artistic goals. Craig brings experience in both the for-profit and non-profit arenas. He was a founding board member and served for ten years as Treasurer of the acclaimed Women's choral group Vox Femina Los Angeles. He has produced independent movies and several award-winning documentaries and acclaimed original plays. He is a

graduate of Syracuse University which prepared him well for his recent move from Los Angeles to Minnesota!

We are really thrilled to give Craig a

WARM welcome to Minnesota! He brings incredible experience in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors and already has fabulous ideas for taking One Voice into our next decade.

Is there anything you'd like to add about your own connection to Brave Souls and Dreamers - It sounds like a marvelous program.

It has been thrilling to work with Robert Seeley in preparing this commission and in rehearsal with the chorus. His music powerfully portrays the wrenching emotions of individuals caught in a state of violence, but even more powerfully offers a sense of hope for a world without violence and fear.

The first time I heard BraveSouls & Dreamers I sat in the audience with tears streaming down my face. Robert Seeley has combined some incredibly powerful texts about the violence of war and the wonder of peaceful community with music that just melts your heart. One of my favorite movements is an aria for the character of a Mother who has lost a child to war. Her grief and anger and angst are incredibly beautiful and hear-wrenching.

Seeley's writing style draws from classical to lyrical to Broadway styles and is very accessible for both our singers and for the audience. His melodies absolutely float and the orchestration soars in a way that leaves the listener moved and also filled with hope.

Robert Seeley also composed Naked Man and Metamorphosis both performed by the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus several years ago. If you are a fan of those pieces, BraveSouls & Dreamers will blow you away!

Would you share a few others of your Community Outreach Stories?

On Friday, November 18, [2011] 80 One Voice singers boarded a bus to St. Francis High School to rehearse with their 100-voice Concert Choir in preparation for our collaborative concert in St. Francis on January 9. It is always a bit unnerving to enter a new school not knowing how the students will feel about singing with a bunch of GLBT adults.

At St. Francis, the most awkward moment was when we all crowded onto risers with bodies packed in tight. But, then we started to sing; young voices mixed with older voices and the faces of these young people absolutely lit up. We grooved to an African song and then One Voice singers taught the youth "Bismillah," an Arabic Sufi chant with harmonies that make you shiver. There was an audible sigh from the singers when it ended. The hour of singing flew by

and ended with lots of laughter and excitement about our upcoming joint concert.

One St Francis GSA student remarked, "This was the first time I ever got goosebumps while hearing someone sing!"

After the rehearsal, One Voice enjoyed lunch with 25 members of Gay Straight Alliance at the high school and the conversations and camaraderie continued. Educational moments are always just around the corner, and this was abundantly clear during lunch when one young woman from the GSA asked, "now what does 'heterosexual' mean?"

From St. Francis we headed to Duluth for an evening Brave Souls & Dreamers concert at Plymouth Congregational in collaboration with Duluth United for All Families, a coalition founded on the strong belief in the power of marriage for all and that is committed to defeating the proposed constitutional amendment denying marriage for same-sex couples. The excitement in the sold-out church was palpable. One of the event volunteers exclaimed, "We loved your music—come back anytime. You can come back for a victory concert after we beat this thing!"

A woman who works as a probation officer approached us after the concert shaking her head and said, "I almost didn't come tonight because I have had such a hard week. Too many sad stories. Your music filled my heart and has given me the hope I needed."

Said a mom from Moorhead, "I am 78 years old and I traveled an hour in the dark to be here and hear this concert. My son was basically asked to leave his church because he is gay. I spoke about this at a church meeting. Some people told me I was brave. I was not brave. I was angry and I will keep speaking out and keep supporting my son."

How does one nominate a Brave Soul & Dreamer?

We invite you to nominate your Brave Soul & Dreamer to appear in a concert slide show as well as the One Voice website. This could be an individual who has particularly inspired you with their words or actions. You can name someone in the public eye or from your community or family, living or deceased. Nominations may be submitted on the One Voice websites at www.ovmc.org

Concerts are January 21, 2012, at 7:30 PM, and January 22, 2012, at 3:30 PM at Hopkins High School Auditorium in Minnetonka. For more information, visit www.ovmc.org. Lavender readers can get a \$5 discount on ticket orders with the voucher code "PRIDE". □

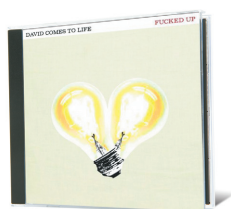


While the presence of the likes of Nickleback, Chris Brown, Katy Perry and the cast of *Glee* made for plenty of painful listening in 2011, there were plenty of highlights to keep a music lover in a good mood.



1. FLEET FOXES *Helplessness Blues*

The easiest way to judge whether an album works for you or not? How often is it on your turntable/CD player/mp3 player. *Helplessness Blues* was, far and away, the album I listened to the most through 2011, making daily plays – often first thing in the morning – throughout the summer and fall. The songs are sublime, smart and sport a maturity sadly lacking in the plastic pop that sits at the top of the charts.



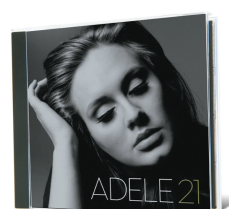
2. FUCKED UP *David Comes to Life*

Punk's not dead, and isn't ever going to die as long as acts like Fucked Up are around to continually twist the genre around their collective fingers. *David Comes to Life* is raucous, raw and loaded with raging energy.



3. THE IDLE HANDS *Life is Beautiful*

Sometimes, small packages have a big impact. This local band's five-song ep made for steady listening throughout the year, often accompanying me on journeys across the Cities. I'm sure the drivers in some of the other cars were a bit freaked out by my singing of "Socialite Death Squad" and "Uptown Burning."



4. ADELE *21*

Hey, a hit album makes the charts this year. Adele showed no signs of a sophomore slump here, showcasing plenty of ever-maturing material and a gorgeous voice. More importantly, Adele knows how to use the voice to great effect without purely showing off, like some kind of anti-Mariah-Carey.



5. DOONTREE *No Kings*

All-star super groups often are fraught with intrigue and danger – see my “worst of” album below – but the Doontree collective has such unity in purpose that this feels more like the “home” release from where all of these talented performers branch off onto their solo albums, like the Wu Tang Clan, but with a deeper need to question the hand we’ve been dealt.



6. BATTLES *Gloss Drop*

Why do I still love music after decades of disappointment? Because you can get something like this; an arty, instrumental post-rock band creating some of the funkiest, fun tunes of the year.



Banging on the Top 10's Door:

THE DECEMBERISTS

*The King is Dead/
Long Live the King*

FLORENCE AND THE MACHINE

Ceremonials

ST. VINCENT

Strange Mercy

WILD FLAG

Wild Flag

JAY Z AND KANYE WEST

Watch the Throne

AMEBIX

Sonic Mass

ATMOSPHERE

Family Sign

BON IVER *Bon Iver*

LUPE FIASCO

Lasers

WYE OAK

Civilian

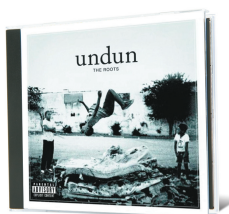
And there is always a yang to the yin:

Worst Album

LOU REED AND METALLICA

Lulu

Look, both artists are decades past their best work, but charging folks for a double album of dull guitar riffs and meandering Lou Reed monologues is close to a crime. Maybe it's all an elaborate joke, aka Metal Machine Music, except I'd rather listen to 24 hours straight of MMM before ever pushing play again on this turkey.



7. THE ROOTS *Undun*

I'm always a bit wary of putting recently released albums on this list, but the latest from the Michelle-Bachmann-baiting hip-hop collective is a driving, powerful release packed with memorable musical and lyrical moments.



8. R.E.M. *Collapse Into Now*

R.E.M. doesn't go out on top exactly – they would have needed to call it quits around the time of Document to do that – but they do leave the business on their own terms, on the back of a string of albums that remind longtime fans what made the Athens trio indie rock ambassadors for three decades.



10. MY MORNING JACKET *Circutal*

We end the top 10 back with some folksy, bluesy rocking material, as My Morning Jacket retreats a bit from their previous sort-of “out there” album for a focused collection of tunes that prove there's still life in old-style songs.



9. TUNE YARDS *Whokill*

I'm not sure what planet this comes from, but boy are the skittering rhythms and playful tunes a lot of fun.

WINTER WHAT-TO-DO



2011 Championship. Photos Courtesy of Red Bull



CRASH THE CATHEDRAL

2012 CRASHED ICE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Crashed Ice. Ice cross downhill. Insanity on ice. Ice cross downhill has been referred to as a hybrid high-speed sport that is a combination of speed skating, boardercross, and downhill skiing. If you've been near the Cathedral at any time since Christmas, you may have noticed a large track being constructed from just north of the Cathedral and extending all the way over the steps, across John Ireland Boulevard, and landing close to 35E. It features a steep 45-degree starting ramp with a kicker that will result in the sport's longest-ever jumps. Racing at speeds up to 37 mph, the padded, skate-wearing extreme athletes will take on the quarter-mile track of jumps, a bridge, and faster-than-sightseeing views of the Cathedral. All on ice. The rules are simple: With four racers per race, the one who crosses the finish line first wins. There will be competitors from 30 countries around the world all working toward a better and better score as they skate through the World Championship races that start here in St. Paul but then proceeds to Valkenburg, Netherlands, and Aare, Sweden, in February and ends on March 17 in Quebec, Canada. The winner of each competition wins 1,000 points and competitors all the way down to 100th (0.5 point) can collect points. Whoever finishes the season with the most points will be crowned the 2012 Red Bull Crashed Ice World Champion.

Starting in 2001, ice cross downhill has only had a World Championship competition since 2009. The last time a competition even close to this magnitude has occurred in the United States was 2004. St. Paul is proud to be hosting it this year and, as our oddly balmy weather has been a surprise to all of us, it's a good thing that the ice canal has a large coolant system to keep it frozen.

Be sure to cheer for the Minnesotans in the group. Early in December over 200 athletes tried out at the Xcel Energy Center to qualify for the Championship competition showing off their speed and agility with a series of jumps, slides and hairpin turns. The fastest 31 competitors from the day advanced to the main event this weekend.

2012 Crashed Ice World Championship

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WINTER WHAT-TO-DO



Photo by Hubert Bonnet

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A festival of cross-country ski related activities. Between Theodore Wirth Park and Uptown, the city will be host to racers, spectators, vendors, and artists. A sculpture contest, plenty of beer and brats, skijoring, ice-cycling, and lovely luminaries make for an amazing weekend. Hopefully, Minnesota will do its share and provide the perfect weather conditions for this famous festival. ➡



photo by sophia hantzes

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WINTER WHAT-TO-DO



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2012 Saint Paul Winter Carnival

St. Paul, MN
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www.winter-carnival.com

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www.wellsfargowinterskate.com

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Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure showing at Omnifest.
Photo by Frank Hurley, courtesy of Scott Polar Research Institute

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WINTER WHAT-TO-DO



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The Art Shanties are back! We missed them last year, but they're gracing Medicine Lake in 2012. Inspired by ice fishing houses, this temporary artist community set up for public tour is as much an embrace of our cold Minnesota winter as it is a rebellion against experiencing it conventionally. The same can be said of art. According to Peter Haakon Thompson, Art Shanty Projects Director, "Expect innovation, intrigue, and caprice in an unpredictable environment. With 20 Shanties and 20 roving performances, this vibrant laboratory will engage audiences directly in a community space that is part art gallery, part art residency and part social experiment." More links and in-depth explanations are available on the Art Shanty Project website, but here is an abridged guide taken from it so you can make your own Shanty Plan.



FILES

R EXPERIENCE

THE NAUGHTY SHANTY

Sarah Honeywell, Aneesa Adams, Marieka Heinlen, Angela Maki-Jones, Mo Honeywell

This shanty is designed to allure you and spark your curiosity from far across the ice. It appears like a warm, red, apparition of intrigue in the middle of a white tundra. Around the exterior of the Naughty Shanty, visitors are invited to interact with the structure by peeking into peep-holes that reveal tiny, naughty scenes inside. Naughty, not dirty.

BASKETBALL SHANTY

Sarah Baker, Beth Chekola, Jess Hirsch, Broc Blegen, Sam Hoolihan, Tye Kerr, Eamonn McCalin, Ben Moren, Stefani Motta
Basketball is a winter sport, but has yet to engage with the seasonal surroundings of a Minnesota winter. The basketball shanty brings a visceral regulation size court to the ice and provides a locker room warming hut to investigate the inner workings of locker room dynamics.

ROBOT REPRISE

Mark Safford, Julian McFaul, Krista Pearson, Stephan Thust, Xena Huff, Andy Kedl, Douglas Saldana

Back with the bot newer better and with a few more gadgets. The Robo shanty is all about Flintstone technology with the impetus to get in and push an invitation to all comers four people can usually push eight riders, or take a swing with seven other friends in the bowels of the bot.

THE SHANTY OF WONDER

Kermit Boyum, Matthew Nupen

Resting ominously on the ice, The Shanty of Wonder only reveals its secrets to people with a strong will and warm mittens.

REFLECTION SHANTY

Brian Nigus, Katy Vonk, Jenny Bookler, Eric Frye, Mel Nguyen

In an effort to produce a beautiful and multi-purpose space for contemplation, new ideas and social activities, we bring you the Reflection Shanty.

FORT SHANTY

Lauren Herzak-Bauman, Megan Wicker, Molly Balcom Raleigh, Alex Newby, Abigail Merlis, Areca Roe

The Fort Shanty is a space to build imaginary, intimate places not unlike those we made as children. Engage your sense of delight and play as you build your own fort using an assortment of pillows, pulleys, ropes and more.

ICE-CYCLES SHANTY

Maryanna Harstad, Janet Groenert, Meg Kosowski, Peter Schulze, Lisa Carlson, Eric Hofstad, Kurt Seaberg, Patti Paulson, Mina and Greg Leierwood

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WINTER WHAT-TO-DO

NORDIC VILLAGE BRIDGE

Valerie Borey, David Christian, Jens Henrik Selin, Kathryn Selin, Allison Spenader, Jeff Gerhardson, Ross Dybvig

Run by the staff and villagers of Concordia Language Villages and using cultural references to bridges and trolls in Nordic story and myth, the goal is to challenge visitors' assumptions about what it means to bridge cultures in our global community.

CAMERA HEAD: INVERT YOUR WORLD

Andy Mattern, Joe Kaercher, Mark Kritz, Brady McClaran

Inspired by the history of photography, the Camera Head shanty is a mobile laboratory where visitors will have the opportunity to check out a head-mounted camera obscura.

SASHAY SHANTAY

Danielle Everine, Carly Schoen, Rachel Baumann, Lela Hoarst Baumann, Lindsay Rhyner, Emrys Stramer, Alex Schroeter, Tony Lanners, Leif Ogren

Join us for a treasure hunting, photo booth fashion journey! Inspired by frozen winds and pioneering voyages, Sashay Shantay aims to recall the romanticism of winters of yore.

CAPITOL HILL

Aaron Rosenblum, Hannah Rivenburgh, Andrew Gramm, Jael O'Hare, Peter Valelly, Jacque Kutvirt

Capitol Hill appears on the ice as a monument to the absurdities of government.

MONSTERS UNDER THE BED SHANTY

Rachel Bendtsen, Matt Mackall, Cali Mastny, Caly McMorrow, Aaron Prust, Scott Raleigh, Cole Sarar

Monsters Under the Bed Shanty is a fantastic getaway under a giant bed with all the creature comforts. Visitors of every age can socialize and relax in a friendly monster-positive environment.

AUDIO ADVENTURE SHANTY

Brady Clark, Mykle Hansen, Kelly Peach

The Audio Adventure Shanty provides visitors to the Art Shanty Projects the opportunity to experience the project more richly by taking a narrated tour. Headphones are available for checkout to take scheduled tours leaving at set times throughout the day.

30 STAR SHANTY

Jen Goepfert, Andrew Arlt, VOA SALT High School Students

Minnesota became a territory in 1849 - when the flag would have had 30 stars on it. This shanty is all about trying to recreate the life and times of 1849 - 1858.

SITANDSPINSHANTY

Tory Roff, Bridget Beck, Erick Briden, Warren Samuel, Dan Isaacs

This winter, we want to engage visitors to Medicine Lake in the most universal form of interpersonal interaction... play. We are making a giant sit-and-spin shanty reminiscent of one of our favorite childhood toys.

ACTUALLY I'VE BEEN PIONEERING NEW ENTHUSIASMS

Molly Reichert, John Kim, John Moore, Daniel Dean, Emily Stover

Actually, I've Been Pioneer New Enthusiasms is an art shanty that will be built from a salvaged Avion travel trailer. It will house parametrically designed interior spaces that form multiple organic and body-friendly surfaces on which people can rest, warm themselves and relax...sauna included. Bring your suit and towel.

SOLAR ARK SHANTY

Aaron Marx, Aaron Squadroni, John Tapp, Mike Vanvleet, Dan Yudchitz, Allison Fritz-Salzman, James Howarth, Matthew Finn, Derek Peterson, Patrick Smith

Two fundamental elements that shape people's experience on a lake during a Minnesota winter are ice and sunlight. The Solar Ark Shanty is a vessel for encountering the sun that will provide opportunities for people to alter the sun's relationship to the frozen lake.

ONE ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE

Anthony Warnick, Katinka Galanos, Patricia Healy, Alyson Cward, Derek Ernster

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DANCE SHANTY

Mike Rasmussen, John Each, Jon Pedersen, Mike Hoolihan

The Dance Shanty is a public space constructed on a frozen lake where the boundaries between artist and observer are pushed, blurred, flipped, popped and locked in the pursuit of positive personal and communal transformation.

LETTERPRESS SHANTY

MC Hyland, Jeff Peterson, Jonathon Peterson, Sarah Fox, Sara Parr

Bringing you the latest in shanty news, opinion and wild exaggerations-hot off the presses every day-the Letterpress Shanty is home to the Art Shanty Projects' communally authored newspaper, The Shantyquarian.

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Trends for 2012

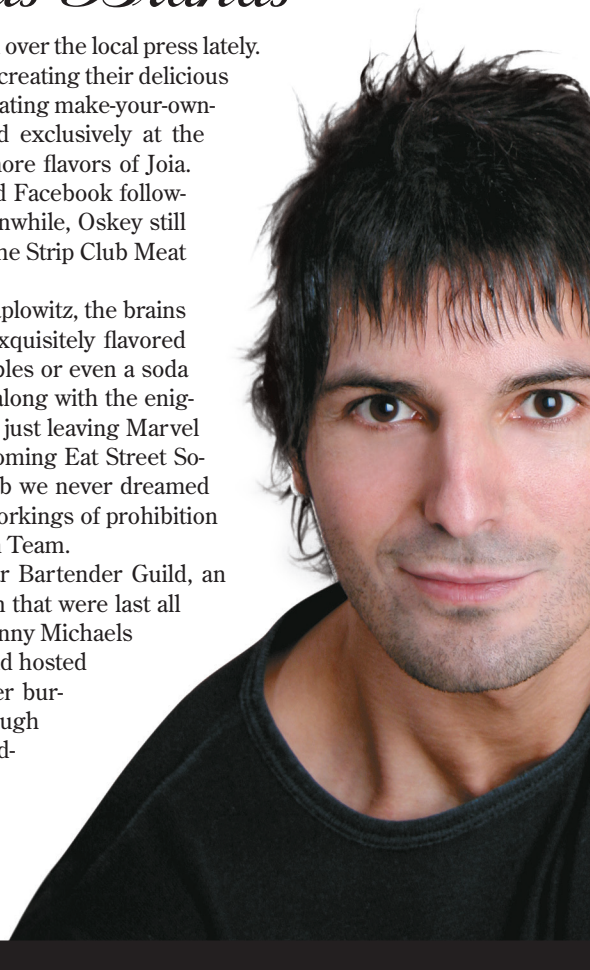
While most people have been hanging up new calendars and sweeping up the end of the pine needles, I've been hounding our favorite chefs and mixologists to find out just what they have on tap for the coming year. Much of what I'm hearing (and tasting) is still in the works, so while we can't quite report everything, there are a couple of emerging trends. I'd like to present you with an amuse-bouche before a very big year of restaurant coverage is delivered. Please keep your hungry eyes trained to this spot in weeks to come. We have much more up our gravy-stained sleeves.

Bartenders as Brands

Dan Oskey's adorable mug has been all over the local press lately. First he worked with Joia Soda to assist in creating their delicious all-natural drinks, then he moved on to creating make-your-own-bitters sets that are currently being sold exclusively at the Wine Market in Mendota. Up next are more flavors of Joia. The company is offering their Twitter and Facebook followers a chance to act as a focus group. Meanwhile, Oskey still keeps up his other job, behind the bar of the Strip Club Meat & Fish most days of the week.

There is also Nick Kosevich and Ira Kaplowitz, the brains and brawn behind Bittercube, a line of exquisitely flavored bitters that elevate any drink, booze, bubbles or even a soda into an elegant stratosphere. Now, they, along with the enigmatic Jesse Held (formerly of the Inn and just leaving Marvel Bar) will run the bar program at the upcoming Eat Street Social. We expect to sip on liquors so superb we never dreamed of their existence along-side creative re-workings of prohibition style classics. This is a bartending Dream Team.

All are also members of the Northstar Bartender Guild, an affiliation of the top drink slingers in town that were last all seen together in the book compiled by Johnny Michaels (of La Belle Vie). On January 8th, the guild hosted an after New Year's Eve bash full of other burgeoning bar superstars. It's no longer enough that a hip eatery sports a known name heading up a kitchen, they'll now need to rely on this collection of crazy talent to craft a drink menu as nuanced and exciting as the food. ➔





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Continued Appreciation of Nose-to-Tail Cuisine

It might be the generous winter-wear we're swathed in, but it does seem to be that while many cry out for plant-based diets, those leading the charge are thundering, "More meat for the meat eaters!" One of the first new restaurants out of the gate will be Jack Riebel's (formerly of the Dakota) Butcher & the Boar. Meat and bourbon! Toss in a stogie and throw something dead on the floor – we are Westerners that have conquered the world! What makes this such an interesting new spot is that the sausages that they're making are really delicately flavored and although familiar tasting, unlike anything else currently being made. While we should eat more plants, we also must be mindful of the animals that we do consume.

Also, anyone asserting that the charcuterie trend is dead is clearly not watching Mike Phillips. Since his days at Craftsman, he's been curing meats, learning the delicate, ancient art. In that time, his skills have been finely honed. The pork rillettes are lusciously soft, packed with jiggly fat and full of flavor. Speaking of fat – oh, ho ho – he's also doing lard. Yes, subtly seasoned, carefully adorned with bits of herb lard for spreading on crackers. It is gasp inducing, decadent and divine. These are bits of animal to appreciate. While his items are currently only available for private parties at the Liffey, Local, Kieran's and Cooper, word has it that some items will soon be available for retail sale.

With that whole animal appreciation comes a desire to do such things ourselves. Nothing impresses a dinner party like a slice of your own duck prociutto. While books (see *Primal Cuts* by Melissa Guggiana) can help the curious home curer, there are a couple of retail spots selling the harder to find bits. Clancey's can get you a suckling pig or a fat hunk of unprocessed belly, easy. Heartland Farm Direct Market for those on the East Side has a Duroc pork bacon that cooks up like belly and tubs of lard, duck fat, goat prociutto – all kinds of crazy goodies. Watch their cold cases to see what other cured delights.

Cupcakes Schmupcakes

For a time it seemed you couldn't turn around without doing a face plant into some cutesy, frosted confection. The diminutive cakes' moment has finally past. Although it was a little tardy in shaping up, 2011 was all about the Twin Cities donut scene.

With Yo Yo donuts in Minnetonka proving that, yes, that donut can do you one better than a side of bacon – how about a topping of bacon? How a like them long johns?

Then along came Mojo Monkey and they blew the expectation of what a simple cake donut can be right off the map. Mixing such unconventional ingredients into the batter such as parsnips (that means it's healthy, right?) Owner Lisa Clark coaxes sweet just to the edge of savory and then back again, constantly making and frying orders fresh. So, while yes, they may occasionally be out of some flavors, you will never be served a sodden, greasy disk of disappointment.

Then, in December, the long anticipated Donut Cooperative

finally hit the ground running. From the creative flavor combinations to the availability of gluten-free and vegan offerings, they hit their Seward neighborhood's cravings right in the sweet spot. Adding more member-owners all the time, they really are a co-op in the best possible sense, a collection of people who love their craft and that is a kind of passion that seeps into every bite.

But we're not talking about donuts! So last year! Looking ahead, I'm predicting this will be the year of ice cream. It's too soon to be able to dare speak their names, but already I know of two burgeoning businesses that are churning out some of the richest, most creatively flavored ice cream I've ever encountered. Imagine a tangy, creamy base with grassy hints of a young goat cheese, spiked with impossibly crispy, salty pita chips, swirled with sun drenched sugar dates. Too odd? How about a Manhattan? Rich, smooth bourbon based cream with home-made pickled cherries as spritely as Katie Perry on a pack of pixie sticks, smooth as a Don Draper come-on. Hopefully, we'll soon be able to purchase such things. Until then, we watch anxiously as established ice cream darling Izzy's begins to build a new base of operations in Minneapolis. They will keep their retail space in the original Saint Paul location, but will expand to be able to make more ice cream, much, much more.

It's going to be a very full year.



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Jack Edwards

A Towering Figure in Costume Design

IN TWIN CITIES theater history, Jack Edwards could be called the “Dean of Costume Design” and a major figure in American regional theater history. Before he began his 18 year tenure as the Guthrie Theater’s Costume Director (1971-1989), he worked as the right hand man alongside some of New York’s significant 1960s costume designers and earned praise for his own design for *What Did We Do Wrong?* at the Helen Hayes Theater (1967). In the ’60s Edwards also worked on such New York productions as *To Clothe the Naked*, Tony-winner *Applause* with Lauren Bacall, and the national tour of the iconic, lesbian-themed *The Killing of Sister George*. Edwards was also closely associated with such fashion luminaries as William J. Cunningham and Ray Diffen.

After leaving the Guthrie in 1989, Edwards began 12 years as costume designer for the 8th Floor Christmas Fantasy Lands. For this he is probably as beloved as he was for his years of gorgeous Guthrie designs. One often hears how the 8th Floor shows are no longer the beguiling things they were back when Edwards created them.

In 1990 Edwards designed the Pre-Game Super Bowl Show with Jack Barkla for musician Dan Witkowski, and in 1993, costumes for Prince’s Ulysses tour. Not to mention designs for the Holidazzle Parade, Ordway, Children’s Theatre, and Minnesota Dance Theatre.

The 77-year old’s work can now be observed and celebrated in Character in Costume: A Jack Edwards Retrospective at St. Paul’s U of M campus at the Goldstein Museum of Design. I spoke with the costume legend at his lovely home in St. Paul recently.

JT: You are admired for a number of reasons, but in the GLBT community I see two primary reasons for that: One, your decade on Broadway and at the Guthrie in its formative years and beyond, and two, you have been out as a gay man since well before Stonewall.

JE: I used to collect boyfriends around the world. I never did very well in America, but God, put me in another country and I was, well, anyway...

JT: Can you share an early memory of what it was like to be gay? The difference between then and now?

JE: Night and day. Nobody even mentioned it. And there were certain people who didn’t think it existed. In second grade all the boys were playing ‘pinch the peter’. The boys were all kept after school except for me and Charles, a beautiful Botticelli boy. We didn’t play

the game at all. On the way home I felt very guilty because I knew they were just playing and I knew I wanted to pinch the peter.

JT: I wonder what Genet would have thought of that! One of your earliest costume assistant jobs was the American premiere of a play by perhaps the 20th century’s most controversial openly gay playwright, Jean Genet. *The Blacks in 1961*. A huge hit (with Cicely Tyson, Maya Angelou, Charles Gordone, Louis Gossett, Jr., James Earl Jones, and Roscoe Lee Brown).

JE: It was one of the Off-Broadway shows with no money. We had a little room above the theater that we made clothes in. Each of us (costume assistants) had only one dress. Pat Zippodt was a brilliant designer. She was so brainy that she had two Phi Beta Kappa keys that she wore as earrings. She was very serious and very intellectual and just wonderful. When she did 1776—

JT: The one that beat out *Hair* for the Best Musical Tony?

JE: *Hair* blew the hell out of Broadway theater but it didn't replace it. It was an individual, which is fine. And of the day. It was wonderful. And strangely, I knew Gerome Ragni (*Hair*'s co-creator), because he was one of the spear carriers in Richard Burton's *Hamlet*.

JT: In which you were-

JE: Assistant designer to Jane Greenwood. The producer said they're going to be in rehearsal so they don't need costumes designed. The concept of the production was that it was set in a rehearsal. So I said, so why don't you try asking everybody to wear what they would wear to a rehearsal and let them make their own choice? Well, Richard, of course, was all in black. Gerome Ragni came in a red ski sweater and white jeans. Well now, who did you watch? And he (the producer) decided well, maybe we did need a costume designer. So Jane and I, actually did with our own hands the players' costumes, up in Toronto.

JT: That's the player King and Queen in *Hamlet's* play within a play.

JE: Yes. And I was only supposed to stay through Toronto. Then when he said "I would like you to stay on through the Broadway run.", it killed me because I had already committed myself to the Santa Fe Opera.

JT: You came to Minneapolis in 1971 when Michael Langham had taken the reins as the Guthrie's Artistic Director and was still shaping the theater's identity in the way Sir Tyrone Guthrie had envisioned.

JE: I came to Minneapolis with what I called my sur-



Photo Courtesy of Jack Edwards



Photos Courtesy of Jack Edwards



vival kit. I had a hand made quilt. I had silver candlesticks and my flatware and a couple of pillows. That made my life. I moved into the Oak Grove and designed *A Touch of the Poet*; not much scope but it put my foot in the door. And that was it for me. And at the end of the season I went back to New York.

Then I was at Joe Allen's (Restaurant) one night and Len Cariou was there and said, you know, it's really a shame you won't go back to Minneapolis. I said I never said I wouldn't go back. I said I wouldn't go back under the situation the way it is. Everybody gets \$60 a week and they work every waking hour. I said the theater is parasitic. It takes advantage of the people who make it possible for it to exist. And I refuse to be part of that! So I told them I wouldn't come back till they paid the (costume) workroom an hourly wage. They said, oh well, we can't afford it. I said yes you can. Take the same amount of money that you do now and break it up by hours and then pay them accordingly and then when they're through with those hours, they go home. Oh well, we'll never get the work done. I said, well in that case, you don't deserve to have it done. I hate people who take advantage of artists! I just hate it! So they finally agreed and they came

back. I wasn't making a great deal of money but I was making that amount every week, so it meant I could plan.

JT: You've mentioned the struggles of dancers you saw in your New York years.

JE: Out of the 10 years that I worked on Broadway, there were only two dancers who appeared in two shows. All of the others were always new and they were all wonderful. Think of the glut of so many dancers. It was awful to live in New York. You had to have seven room mates.

JT: Tell me about some of your designs after you did return to the Guthrie.

JE: With *Rhinoceros* (1986-87 season) I felt my color palette was very delicate and it was surprising because people came up to me and said how much they liked the color palette. I never even thought they'd see it! But you do your work for yourself and for those few people who do understand. In *Pantagleize* (1977-78 season) -I won't be able to remember them all now- but I used a lot of second and third rung painters as my background in my research. A woman



came up to me after the opening night and she said, other than Enzor -and she started rattling off five of them- were all the ones that I used! She asked did you use anything else? I was speechless! I thought, but I'm glad you came – would you come back every night?

JT: Don't you think that even for the untutored eye, a good design is still going to register?

JE: As I say, if it's right, the untutored eye knows its right. If there's something wrong even the untutored eye -they're not going to know what's wrong or why- but they're going to realize there's something out of kilter. And I think most of the creativity is not in the design but in the construction. That's where you make a statement.

JT: You began your time as Costume Director in 1971 when Michael Langham, who is thought by many to have really shaped the Guthrie's identity was very much in touch with Sir Tyrone Guthrie's vision of what the theater could be. But then at the end of the '70s, Langham left. Alvin Epstein came in for a few years as a kind of interim figure. Then in 1980 Liviu

Ciulei took the Artistic Director reins. Unlike Guthrie and Langham, he and his Artistic Associate, Garland Wright, who would eventually succeed him, were concept-driven. Guthrie and Langham, were basically text-driven.

JE: When Liviu took over the theater he called me down for a meeting. I went in and he said, well Jack, I've seen a lot of things that you have designed but I don't see a Jack Edwards stamp. And I said thank you. I knew that's not what he meant. And he looked at me and I said, this is not about me. This is about the playwright and the play. ■

Character in Costume: A Jack Edwards Retrospective

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James Sewell Ballet's *Social Movements*. Photo by Eric Saulitis

➔ **Cat on a Hot Tin Roof** — The 1955 Pulitzer Prize-winner is as forthright in its gay themes as just about anything Tennessee Williams ever wrote. In *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, those themes center around Skipper, who is actually not a character in the play itself but rather, the dead football buddy of Brick Pollitt, the main character. Brick is drinking himself into oblivion because he cannot come to terms with Skipper's death. This, in turn, creates misery for Brick's wife Maggie, nicknamed Maggie the Cat.

Carla Steen, the dramaturg for the Guthrie revival, says, "One of the ways I keep hearing Brick (Peter Christian Hansen) described, is that he's an idealist. He idealized his relationship with Skipper and is now dealing -or rather, actively not dealing- with the reality of the relationship. Brick's sexual orientation may add layers of understanding to whatever that relationship was, but the play doesn't clearly tell us what Brick's orientation is. He may be gay, he may be straight. He does appear to be deeply homophobic either way. Maggie (Emily Swallow) appears certain that Skipper was gay -as does Williams in some of his commentary- and had fallen in love with Brick. Brick seems more reluctant to acknowledge that clearly. At one point he tells his father, Big Daddy (David Anthony Brinkley) that 'poor dumb Skipper' just believed that what Maggie said about his feelings for Brick were true - and that it broke him. But at that point, Brick may also still be hiding his own deeper self-loathing for having turned his back on Skipper, so it may be said out of denial and guilt. But given how quickly Skipper falls apart through drink, it's hard to argue that Skipper wasn't tormented by his love for Brick."

Hansen shares, "Brick has never really come to grips with how Skipper felt about him or what their closeness meant. He is forced to re-examine what their whole relationship may have been about and he violently doesn't want to do that. He instead shifts the blame to Maggie for her part in the whole thing and takes refuge behind his liquor. And well, the rest, is the play."

Swallow relates, "Maggie noticed, even back in college, a special bond between Brick and Skipper. But college is a place for boys to be boys, and for boys to spend most of their time with other rowdy boys. It seemed natural- they were teammates, after

all- and let's not forget that Maggie herself was included in that exuberant camaraderie. She was the team's biggest cheerleader. And I think the three of them functioned as a unit in many ways. But college ends, and when it does, it presents a reality that suddenly seems a lot more harsh and has less room for dreaming."

Swallow adds, "Outside the safe confines of the university walls, Skipper and Brick's bond became threatening to Maggie; someone in a trio usually winds up feeling like a third wheel, and she was determined that it not be her. Skipper's devotion to her husband was a threat to her own intimacy with Brick and she refused to ignore it. Since they met, there has been no room in her thinking to imagine a future without Brick. So she went to Skipper to confront it."

Swallow says that after Skipper's death, Maggie refuses to let her life with Brick "be haunted by a ghost. As she says herself 'Life has got to be allowed to continue even after the dream of life is all over.'" She is Brick's reality and is determined to make him see that her love can be strong enough for both of them."

Another extraordinary layer in this Williams masterwork, is that the family estate, run by Big Daddy, had belonged to a gay couple, Jack Straw and Peter Ochello. Brinkley observes that "At one point in the play, Big Daddy confesses to his son, Brick, that he had 'knocked around' in his time. Before the tender age of ten, Big Daddy Pollitt had bummed the country, sleeping in hobo jungles, railroad YMCAs, and flop houses in many cities. He ended up falling asleep in a wagon load of cotton, half a mile down the road from the plantation of Jack Straw and Peter Ochello. They found him, took him in and gave him a job - essentially saving him. They gave him his purpose in life and his gratitude for their care was immeasurable. He taught them that 'one thing you can grow on a big place more important than cotton - is tolerance.'" He never forgot that. Or them. **Through Feb. 26 • Guthrie Theater, 818 So. 2nd St., Mpls. • (612) 377-2224 • www.guthrietheater.org**

Hetero at the Raucus Caucus II: Box Wine's 2nd Annual 10 Minute Political Play Festival — What if it were "unnatural" to be heterosexual instead of homosexual? Director Ben Layne says that playwright Greg Abbott "takes that idea and fully fleshes it out, while kind of turning it on its head, while mothers latch onto Bible passages, cite stereotypes that all heterosexual men are promiscuous cowboys, and even question their ability to keep a steady job and a home. A frank conversation flows around prejudice, love, and understanding." **Through Jan 26 • www.boxwinetheatre.com**

SPOTLIGHT

Independence — Kess, a lesbian literature professor who returns to her hometown of Independence, Iowa from Minneapolis, is a major character in Lee Blessing's play. Actress Rachel Flynn relates, "The last time Kess was at home, four years ago, she had to do the dirty work of committing her mother to the Mental Health Institute for three months, and dealing with her youngest daughter's teen pregnancy. She hasn't called or written much since and there is a lot of anger and hurt from all sides needing to be healed. Independence offered little or no opportunity for Kess to be open about her sexuality when she was growing up but her mom isn't ready, willing, or able to hear it. Most of Kess's focus in the play involves being the eldest child, resuming her role as the one her mother relied on -because her father wasn't in the picture very consistently- reconnecting with her younger sisters, and trying to find the balance of meeting family obligations without losing all of what she's worked so hard to establish during her time spent outside Independence: a career, a healthy relationship, a home, an identity, a life." **Through Jan. 29 • Theatre in the Round, 245 Cedar Ave., Mpls. • (612) 333-3010 • www.theatreintheround.org**

Out There 2012: Global Visionaries — When Walker's Out There series for edgy performance art was on a roll in the 1990s, the focus was on gender, racial, and sexual identity. However, at the same time, in Washington, President Clinton and House Speaker Gingrich were ushering in controversial foreign trade agreements in the name of 'The Global Economy', which have consequently, if not cryptically, laid the groundwork for today's Out There focus. This year's series, titled Global Visionaries, examines the consequences of what Clinton and Gingrich birthed a generation ago. Job displacement, economic collapse, and stress of daily life take center stage as they comment on a planet whose cultures of fear and widening economic divisions have reshaped how we see ourselves. Beirut's Rabih Mroue has been hailed for his skeptical take on current day issues with *Looking For A Missing Employee* (through Jan. 14). *From Japan, Hot Pepper, Air Conditioner, and the Farewell Speech* (Jan. 19-21), examines the global economy's use of language and how stress affects contemporary men and women. Argentina's economic collapse is the subject of showman Mariano Pensotti's *El Pasado es un Animal Grotesco (The Past is a Grotesque Animal)* (Jan.26-28). **Through Jan 28 • Walker Art Center, 1750 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. • (612) 375-7600 • www.walkerart.org**



A Zed and Two Noughts. Photo Courtesy of Zeitgeist Films

Pariah — Filmmaker Dee Rees has created a landmark work that reveals the anguish of a black teenaged lesbian. And this is Rees' debut feature! In a soul-baring lead performance, Adepero Oduye plays Alike, a high school student who is already demonstrating the discipline necessary to become a serious writer and who is also struggling with how she might explore her butch lesbian identity.

Though Alike's home life is in emotional turmoil, it is still economically sound, unlike her best friend, Laura (the splendidly tough Pernell Walker), whose living situation is in dreadful disarray. Alike's controlling mother (an astonishing Kim Wayans) projects her rage toward her husband's infidelity onto Alike, whose butch 'unladylike' ways bring out Audrey's worst. Wayans's supporting turn is Oscar caliber.

One scene that simply unnerves is when a 'friend' of Alike's policeman father, Arthur (a charismatic Charles Parnell), expresses disgustingly brazen lesbophobia toward her. It's tectonically steeped in the sexist notion that women should fit specific gender roles. (Yes, the film is set in current day. And yes, sexism and homophobia are issues that black communities actively grapple with, though neocon media gives the false impression that there's total alliance between racial and sexual minorities simply because they may tend to vote for the same political candidates.) In contrast, a seeming friend, a female, Bina (Aasha Davis), delivers Alike a wicked emotional blow that is actually more damaging than what the sexist delivers. Bradford Young's bravely intimate cinematography takes us into the psyches of the characters and is light years superior to the garishly adolescent cinematography any number of Hollywood action flicks, whose intention, or design, if you will, is, of course, to make us fear intimacy and dialogue. Way to go Bradford Young! **currently screening • Uptown Theater, 2906 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. • (612) 392-0402 • www.landmarktheatres.com**

Miracle at 824 Hennepin Avenue or Skyway to the Manger Zone — The new Brave New Workshop is in the space that was once called Hey City Stage and after that, Hennepin Stages. Vibrant blues and reds enhance the walls – a perfect choice for a comedy theater. And two bars, one upstairs and one down, will keep you well oiled. The BNW actor regulars are clearly having fun with this holiday show, which despite its Christmas title, will run till late January. Katy McEwen's vocals demonstrate stylistic range with a nod to what sounds like Stephen Sondheim and a fun rip-off of the Russian folk '60s hit, *Those Were The Days* that was popularized, if not immortalized, by Mary Hopkin. The show's funniest bit is when Josh Eakright cuddles up into a 'Crap Sack', a body suit where you can sleep, defecate, and even be conveniently bundled up for your coffin when you pass away. **Through Jan. 28 • Brave New Workshop, 824 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. • (612) 332-6620 • www.bravenewworkshop.com**

Icy Ambition

SNOWY STREETS. Icy sidewalks. After midnight. Freezing cold and no one in sight. The street lamps alone send chills through passersby. They seem so cold—narrow and metal, bone-chilling to the eye.

Bundled up though we are, the cold finds its way in. Up our pant legs and through our coat sleeves. The sting somehow finds its way past our tightly bound scarves, down our chests and over our backs.

“What’s the point in wearing any clothes at all? This is ridiculous,” a friend poses sarcastic and muffled, his mouth buried in his scarf.

“Please keep your clothes on. No one wants to see that,” I reply. We laugh.

We left the bar drunk, stumbling almost. The cold fixed that. Now a contingency of under, albeit well-dressed, friends walk eerily quiet to an after party. What a wonderful thing downtown is—everything close enough in the summer to walk to, and not far enough away in the winter to abstain from.

Now’s the time we wish we’d brought hats. Our ears flush in anger over our stupidity: “Was your hairstyle really that important?”

they snap.

Halfway there and this is the moment we remember that snow is beautiful only at a distance. On postcards or in Christmas movies. Snow shouldn’t actually exist, one decides in its company. Unless you’re a kid. Or a rookie. First winter in the Twin Cities? Yeah, it’s cute for about five minutes.

“Ahhhhh!” a cry rings out from behind. I turn to see one of my friends sitting on the ice, the latest victim of winter gravity. Everyone stops and turns to look, but we hesitate to help him to his feet. Such a gutsy move begs the ice to knock your feet from under you as well. We all wait for someone else to offer a hand. What polite people we become in the winter.

Once he’s back on his feet, we continue our trek. We pass dark shops and restaurants. We see lonely sidewalk cafes, months away from their summer glory. And we remain quiet. Waiting for a shout from the next man down, maybe. Focused on staying warm and making it inside, sure. Knowing it’s worth every moment, definitely. □

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Against the Amendment: A Conversation with Richard Carlbom

Richard Carlbom is the Campaign Manager for Minnesotans United for All Families – the umbrella organization working to defeat the anti-marriage amendment in November 2012. He joined the campaign in September of 2011 after serving as Communications Director for St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman and prior to that as Campaign Manager for Congressman Tim Walz re-election in 2010. You can follow the campaign on Twitter @MN4allfamilies or him @richardcarlbom.

Lavender Magazine: Can you give our readers a little background on the amendment?

Richard Carlbom: At the close of the legislative session in May 2011 a vote was taken to propose the question of defining marriage as between one man and one woman before the voters of Minnesota. Within hours of that vote, OutFront MN and Project 515 formed Minnesotans United for All Families. Quickly that coalition grew to include national organizations like HRC, The Task Force and Freedom to Marry, along with local business and community leaders. Our broad coalition is united on one goal: make Minnesota the first state to reject an amendment like this.

LM: Will you talk more about the coalition committed to voting no?

RC: Our coalition of two in May has grown to over 120 today. We are supported by members of every political party in Minnesota, communities of faith from all denominations, business leaders, community leaders, elected officials and more. It is an amazing team that may disagree on other issues, but when it comes to marriage, believe the love gay and lesbian couples share is just as important as a straight couples'.

LM: Why is this amendment impor-



Photo by Gia Vitali

tant for Minnesota?

RC: As a Minnesotan, I want to be able to say after November 2012 that Minnesota is the kind of place that welcomes all people, all families. We're the kind of people that think about our neighbors and coworkers, friends and family and treat them how we would want to be treated. This amendment does just the opposite. It will permanently write discrimination into our constitution. And, that's just not who we are as Minnesotans.

When we win, we will have improved the lives of every Minnesotan. And we will send a resounding message to those who hope to place these divisive amendments up for a vote that the days of successfully driving a wedge into communities around the country are coming to an end.

Many in our coalition have said they want to be on the "right side of history". Voting No will put you there.

Personally, it's important to me because I want to marry my partner of 4 years, Justin. Marriage says love like no other word can, and we want to share that with our friends, family and frankly, our state – and have them all hold us accountable to the commitment we make to one another.

LM: You were the mayor of St. Joseph, Minnesota. Can you tell our read-

ers about your time as mayor and the lessons learned that have shaped you?

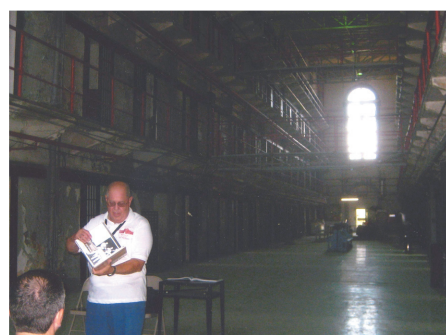
RC: Being elected mayor twice in my hometown was a great honor and provided me with a deep sense of responsibility. I am a political organizer because it gives me a chance to improve lives. I want to wake up, every morning, motivated that the work before me is work that will improve at least one life that someone else is living. As we continue this important campaign, I want to be a part of a collective effort to improve the lives of all Minnesotans.

LM: Campaigns can be pretty intense, with long hours, high stress and demanding expectations. How do you and your team manage that?

RC: We know we are not alone. We may be at the center of the largest grassroots campaign in Minnesota history, but we know our powerful strength as an organization is created by our supporters and volunteers around Minnesota. They are all committed to defeating this amendment – and you can't fake that energy. Our team keeps this in perspective and we are not afraid to ask the community for help.

LM: For people that are opposed to the ban on marriage, what can they do right now?

RC: Three things: 1) Make sure your friends, family, neighbors, coworkers all know this anti-marriage amendment is on the ballot in November. 2) Start a conversation with them about why marriage matters to you and how hurtful this amendment is to same-sex couples. 3) Go to our website (mnunited.org) and pledge to Vote No, volunteer or contribute. ■



Main street, Jefferson City. Along the Katy trail, train station converted to info point. State Capitol, Jefferson City. Inside cell block A in Missouri State Penitentiary. Photos by Carla Waldemar

Columbia, the Gem of the Prairie

The deputy warden pinned me with his gaze as the barred gate thumped shut with a despairing clang. I'm incarcerated in the Missouri State Penitentiary—maximum security division—and, unlike its former lifers, I'm having the time of my life.

Mike Schreiber, who retired when the prison was decommissioned in 2004, transports us on a captivating (pardon me) tour of the bad old days of the lock-up, older and more dreaded than Alcatraz. We begin in the six-man cells of Block A, where boxer Sonny Liston once did time. As did Emma Goldman, in the women's division, having been arrested for seditious sympathies. And James Earl Ray, who escaped in a bread box before gunning down Martin Luther King, plus 5,000 others over the years, locked in the dungeon's black hole, with whipping post, if they were naughty, or taken to the gas chamber at the end of their lives, and our tour.

A tour of the State Museum is almost as unsettling, for it focuses on Missouri's drama in the Civil War as "a state divided"—with a star in both Confederate and Unions flags—

as brother fought brother, with raids by guerrilla bandits for extra credit. "More violence than most other states," says one account. "Chaos," declares another.

It's housed in the lovely State Capitol of Jefferson City. But upstairs, it's another story, told by murals. The show-stoppers are the scenes enveloping the House Lounge painted in 1936 by Thomas Hart Benton, the Michelangelo of the Midwest, who captures the social history of Missouri in characters from Huck Finn and Jesse James to the everyman of the fields, factories and, yes, bordellos.

The Capitol's snowy dome shines above the cornfields as you approach from Columbia, a showpiece 30 miles distant, smack in the epicenter of the "Show Me" state. Daniel Boone's son helped map out the town in the 1820s, and covered wagons heading west made this their first stop. The Boone County Historical Museum recounts the days when "the edge of Missouri was the edge of civilization" with an old-time general store, a slave's shotgun house, and uniform of Bloody Bill Anderson, a Confederate guerrilla who rode

with his reins in his teeth and a six-shooter in each hand.

Times are more mellow today. Columbia, pop. 100,000, overlooking the wide Missouri River, is nicknamed "The Athens of Missouri" for its three colleges. It boasts nearly as many art galleries as bars—and there are plenty of those, highlighted by the Blue Note, which hosts musicians like Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, REM and the Marsalis boys. It's the after-party site for the annual Roots n Blues n Barbecue Festival, where crowds swayed to Mavis Staples' XXL Gospel voice and the "sawngs" of Dr. Ralph Stanley, 97-year-old "godfather of bluegrass."

The Mizzou campus is home to more of homeboy Benton's works—woodcuts, this time—while the Stephens campus hosts a knockout costume collection. Its current show, Fashion Circus (through December 15), spotlights mannequins as ringmaster-dominatrices with high hats, high boots, and whips. The collection varooms from Oleg Cassini to Coco Chanel and more (more, more!).

Continued on page 49 ➔



QUICK FACTS

Info: www.VisitJeffersonCity.com (573-632-2882) and www.visitcolumbiano.com (800-652-0987)

Columbia is an oasis in the Bible belt; a city where all are welcome to drink, dance and spoon together. Two gay bars head the list, however: Arches & Columns and SoCo (as in South Columbia).



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Altered States

SOMETIMES YOUR humble columnist is startled to see concepts, ideas, and practices associated with the modern-day leather/BDSM/fetish community appear in other communities, places, and times. Throughout history, humans have yearned for altered states of consciousness. And they have arrived at similar ways to reach those altered states.

Example: Many descriptions of ancient “mystery” initiation ceremonies, whether in Egypt, Greece, Rome, the middle east or among the Celts and Druids, contain similar details. The ceremonies supposedly took place in dark chambers, usually underground. The initiate often had to undergo some kind of suffering but was able to transmute it into spiritual knowledge and enlightenment. One account of these cer-

emonies on the web likened them to a crucifixion—except the initiate was lightly bound to a table “shaped like the Roman numeral X.” Sounds to me like a dungeon with a St. Andrew’s cross.

According to *The Way of the Shaman* by Michael Harner, aboriginal native people and tribes throughout North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia arrived independently at practices and concepts for healing that had many similarities. In their earth- and nature-based worldview, illness was seen as a loss of a person’s spirit, soul, or power. With the help of hypnotic drumming (and sometimes plant-based hallucinogens) the shaman was able to enter an altered state of consciousness, journey to the spirit world and, often aided by “power animals,” retrieve the patient’s lost

or stolen power, thus making the patient a whole being again.

Many people today say they find BDSM experiences have helped them “reclaim their personal power” after incidents of serious illness or domestic or sexual abuse. The repetitive sound of a flogger hitting a person’s back can induce the same kind of consciousness shift as a shaman’s drum. And it would appear that many in our community resonate with either puppies or ponies as their personal power animals.

The fact that our community’s archetypes have so many similarities to the archetypes of so many other communities in other places and times points to a conclusion: perhaps, based on history and human experience, kinky people are more “normal” than some non-kinky types might care to admit. ■



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Norway Refuses Gay Iraqi Asylum, Says 'Go Home, Be Discreet'

LGBTQ Nation reports that Norway's high court has ruled that although Kurdish refugee Azad Hassan Rasol is gay, and gay men are at risk in Iraq, he can not stay in Norway and should seek protection from Kurdish authorities. Rasol told reporters, "My clan is going to kill me. Gays and lesbians cannot live openly in Iraq." Just last month, Kurdish police allegedly raided a gay party and arrested 25 men.

Gay Couple Sue Hawaii B&B, Claim Discrimination

The Associated Press reports that two lesbians filed suit against a Hawaii bed and breakfast they claim denied them a room for being gay in 2007. Diane Cervelli and Taeko Bufford say Aloha Bed & Breakfast owner Phyllis Young denied their request for a room because she was uncomfortable, for religious reasons, with having lesbians in her home. The lawsuit seeks to order Young to comply with Hawaii law which guarantees gays and lesbians public accommodation, as well as an unspecified monetary sum.

Rick Perry Confronted by Teen Over Gays in the Military

ABC News reports that Republican presidential candidate Rick Perry was confronted about his opposition to gay people in the military by a 14-year-old, openly bi-

sexual girl after a town hall event. Rebecca Green asked Perry, "I just want to know why you're so opposed to gays serving openly in the military, why you want to deny them that freedom when they're fighting and dying for your right to run for president?" Perry responded, "I don't agree that openly gays should be serving in the military. 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' was working." He also told Green that being gay is a sin.

Mississippi Mayor's Expense Receipts Prompt Coming Out

The Commercial Appeal reports that Southaven, Mississippi mayor Greg Davis revealed that he is gay. Davis made the announcement after receipts from a purchase he made at a Canadian store catering to gay men came to light. The charges are part of a wider investigation into allegations that Davis charged taxpayers thousands of

dollars for expensive dinners, alcohol, and other expenses. He told reporters, "At this point in my life and in my career, while I have tried to maintain separation between my personal and public life, it is obvious that this can no longer remain the case."

Gay Marriage 'Improves Health'

The BBC reports that US researchers have shown that legalizing same-sex marriage may create a healthier environment for gay men. According to the American Journal of Public Health, the number of visits by gay men to clinics dropped significantly after same-sex marriages were legalized.

Virginia Board Allows Adoption Agencies to Discriminate Based on Sexual Orientation

The Washington Post reports that the Virginia Board of Social Services voted to allow state-licensed

adoption agencies to discriminate against prospective adoptive and foster parents based on their sexual orientation, political beliefs, and other personal characteristics. The board voted 5-1 to strip discrimination protections.

Gay Porn Actor Fired from Police Gym Two Years Ago Still Actually Works There

The Miami New Times reports that although Bruno Diaz was supposedly fired from his job as the manager of the Miami Beach Police Athletic League gym two years ago following complaints he had appeared in adult films in the 90s, he was never actually fired. The League board at the time voted to fire Diaz by a vote of 7-1, but they never followed through. A lawyer for the board pointed out that they could have been sued if they had actually let him go.

Colombian Bishop Criticizes Gay Adoption

UPI reports that leading Colombian bishop Juan Vicente Cordoba criticized a recent court decision allowing openly gay American journalist Chandler Burr to adopt two Colombian boys. Cordoba hinted in an interview that Burr could become attracted to his children. "I am not accusing him of anything," Cordoba said. "But one thing is clear and that is that he has homosexual tendencies ... and he will receive two children at an age when they may be attractive to him, which could be a temptation." The boys 10 and 13 were removed from Burr's care when it was discovered he was gay. Following psychological tests, the boys were returned to him.

Gay Aussie Sex Ad Safe Despite Protests

The Australian reports that the Advertising Standards Bureau has refused to remove a billboard for a gay-themed safe-sex ad, even though it was the most hated ad in the country. The billboard campaign created for the Queensland Association for Health Communities showed two men embracing with the text "Rip & Roll" underneath. The Bureau rejected the complaints judging the billboard not offensive and carrying an important social message. ■

Continued on page 45

For art in the making, explore the North Village Art District, anchored by Artlandish (regional crafts) and the Catacombs—warrens with artists at work. Nearby, Orr Street Studios houses working artists, such as African-American painter Byron Smith, who grew up here in the Jim Crow days and now can move from the balcony to the front row of the opulent Missouri Theater of 1928. Nearby, Ragtag Cinema shows indie films before they hit New York in a shabby-chic MidMod setting with full bar and treats from Uprise Bakery.

Then walk (everything's walkable) to The District, 45 not-so-square blocks in the center of town housing a hundred-plus retail shops (vintage clothing to sassy gifts, antiques to avant collectibles), 70 bars and restaurants, and 45 live performances a week. Eat at Flat Branch, a brewpub that pours everything from ginseng lager to a stout-fueled ice cream float. Head to Bleu for creative bites like smoked shrimp and grits; Sycamore for an update on fried tomatoes; Addition's for knockout steaks and seafood; and Broadway Brewhouse for the ribs you've been dreaming of.

Ernie's has been serving breakfast since 1934, back when Chester Gould, an art student at Mizzou, created Dick Tracy while downing its Boone County ham and eggs over easy. To get up-close and personal with these prime eats, head to Saturday's farmers' market, where the basil grows as large as hedges, the eggplant could double as sculpture, and radishes serve as corsages. Musicians jam while Grandma Barb peddles her homemade pies.

End up at Sparky's—everybody does, it's probably a city ordinance—for “good ice cream and bad art,” says a regular, who swears by the lemon-ginger, while I make quick work of my lavender-honey cone.

The flat-out best meal, however, was at Bourgeois Winery, whose countryside bistro overlooks the Missouri River hemming the 200-mile Katy bike trail as it snakes below limestone bluffs. How about the Gorgonzola cheese cake? Or the porcini pecorino gnocchi? The shrimp po' boy? Or... Oh, stop. Time for the tasting room to sample the Vidal Blanc. The Chamboursin. And for sure, the noble Norton.

Overnight in nearby (pop. 250) Rocheport, boasting B&Bs such as Yates, right on that fab trail, with breakfast fit for a Tour de France cyclist, a couple of antiques shops, and a cafe called Abigail's, where lamb chops and local trout are as tasty as the chocolate-peanut butter pie. □

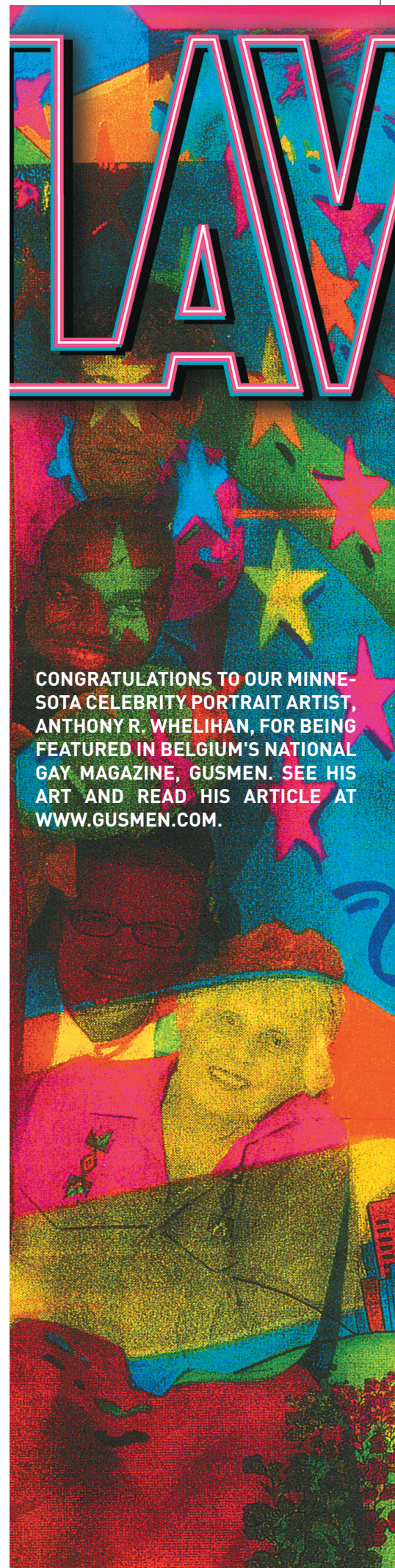


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Are Two Transgender-Related Surveys Contradictory?

TWO RECENT studies related to transgenders apparently contradict each other.

One study, entitled *“Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey,”* was a joint project of the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Among the key findings: nearly ninety percent (90%) of the 6450 transgender and gender non-conforming participants surveyed had experienced job harassment, mistreatment, or discrimination. Almost half the respondents—forty seven percent (47%)—had been fired, demoted or refused employment because of their gender status. Sixteen percent (16%) had been forced to work in the underground economy of illegal sex or drug trades.

Another statistic reflects the fallout from this pattern: a staggering forty-one percent (41%) of respondents reported attempting suicide. That number climbed to fifty one percent (51%) of the transgenders who had been bullied or harassed.

This NCTE/NGLTF survey also found that almost a fifth (19%) of transgenders experienced homelessness. Many respondents lived in extreme poverty; they were nearly four times more likely to have a household income of less than \$10,000.

A second survey, issued last month, seems to paint an entirely different picture—one far rosier for transgenders. The results were summarized in a press release entitled, *“New Survey: Strong Majorities Favor Rights and Legal Protections for Transgender People.”* The survey was conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute, which describes itself as a “non-profit, nonpartisan research and education organization dedicated to work at the

intersection of religion, values and public life.” This study involved a “random digit dial telephone survey” of 2000 adults conducted in August and September, 2011.

The PRRI study focuses on attitudes of people across all walks—presumably, the straight majority. The study showed that eighty-nine percent (89%) agreed that transgenders should have the same general rights and protections as others. Additionally, three quarters (75%) of the participants believed Congress should pass laws to protect transgenders from job discrimination. A nearly equal amount (74%) favored expanding federal hate crime laws to include crimes committed because of a person’s gender identity.

Perhaps not too surprisingly, ninety-one percent (91%) of participants had heard the term “transgender.” Of those, more than two thirds (69%) could define the term without any assistance.

How is it possible to reconcile one survey which documents transgenders as highly oppressed and another which makes them appear almost mainstream?

One explanation: the NCTE/NGLTF survey measures actual transgender experience while the PRRI study gauges societal attitudes. In other words, they deal with two different measurements, even if “transgender” is the common denominator.

Presumably, the impact of public personalities like Chaz Bono underlies the apparent greater acceptance of transgenders by straight Americans, as reflected in the PRRI survey. Additionally, the subject of the “transgender experience” has become far more widely reported in the general media. In turn, this may lend to minimizing the heretofore “freak factor” many associated

with transgenders.

In other words, much of society may now understand that coming out as transgender is simply an attempt to live an authentic life.

On the other hand, the NCTE/NGLTF survey reflects the all-to-often dark side of what it’s like to actually come out as transgender. The respondents there grapple with the day to day reality of close family and friends who react negatively to the idea that a loved one is changing everything about them—appearance, name, even voice. This is where people’s attitudes get tested and hearts broken. The disappointment—and attendant impact on the transgender individual who is trying to navigate to authenticity—shows up in the form of depression, substance abuse, and disruption in families and the workplace.

Still, numbers aren’t everything. In the NCTE/NGLTF study, one respondent wrote, *“My mother disowned me. I was fired from my job after 18 years of loyal employment. I was forced onto public assistance to survive. But I still pressed forward, started a new career and rebuilt my immediate family. You are defined not by falling, but [by] how well you rise after falling.”*

This personal story supports one more finding from NCTE/NGLTF: Over three-fourths (78%) of the transgenders surveyed felt more comfortable with their lives after coming out. If nothing else, transgenders—as a group—are extremely resilient.

It is fair to assume there will be more surveys of transgender experience and mainstream attitudes in the future. One can hope that conditions continue to improve for transgenders to the point that attitudes and actual experience become consistent. □

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New Year's Resolutions: Human Rights Campaign and Corporate Equality

The non-profit's evaluation of companies practices spurs hundreds of businesses nationwide to be more accountable to their GLBT employees, while giving consumers tools to make more informed decisions about where they spend their money.

For the past decade, the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Corporate Equality Index has helped promote equality and accountability to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees in hundreds of workplaces across the country.

The Index, which started in 2002, has helped change the dialogue about equality in the country, where fair-minded practices are not only good for business, but improve people's lives.

With a smartphone app and online buyer's guide that show ratings of companies' practices and employee benefits, consumers and prospective employees can make more cognizant decisions about which businesses to buy from and work for.

Since its inception, The Index, which takes into account a voluntary survey and publicly available information like tax filings to evaluate equity in policies and employee benefits, has doubled the amount of businesses officially rated.

In its first year, The Index rated 319 businesses, where 13 earned a perfect score. This year 636 employers were rated and 190 received 100 percent, according to the 2012 Index report.

Thirteen Minnesota-based companies, including 3M, Cargill, Best Buy, General Mills and UnitedHealth Group, received 100 percent on the 2012 Index.

This year, the Index added new regulations to its 40 criteria to provide equal benefits for same-sex partners and spouses, end benefits discrimination for transgender employees and dependents, show company-wide competency on GLBT issues, and exhibit a public commitment to the GLBT community.

The Index has helped make large strides in workplace equality and continues to drive progress, according to Michael Cole-Schwartz, the Human Rights Campaign's director of communications.

"The Corporate Equality Index has been

transformative in the way that corporate America has viewed GLBT issues," Cole-Schwartz said. "Over the years it has evolved itself and has expanded so we continue to raise the bar."

The Human Rights Campaign will continue to improve The Index, with an emphasis on supporting the needs of transgender employees, who still face many health insurance exclusions, according to Cole-Schwartz.

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation, which funds the Corporate Equality Index, helped push five times as many major U.S. employers to offer transgender-inclusive healthcare coverage, from 49 in the 2009 Index to more than 200 in the 2012 Index.

The Index promotes fair practices within a business, but for a business to get a perfect score, it has to show it supports the GLBT community as a whole.

Cole-Schwartz said that major corporations who take part in the Corporate Equality Index have the sway to steer dialogue of policymakers and the general public.

"It's interesting that corporate America, which is generally viewed as a tremendously conservative institution in our country, has been leading the charge in the fight for equality," Cole-Schwartz said.

And more companies take part in the Index every year; adding 36 in the 2012 Index from the previous year, which, Cole-Schwartz said, is partially the result of "the competitive nature of business."

He added, "If your competitors are participating and proud of a good score, it's an incentive for you to do it."

With the majority of Fortune 500 companies taking part in the survey, Cole-Schwartz explained, it seems more possible to pass legislation like the Employee Non-Discrimination Act, which would nationally ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in hiring and employee benefits.

Since 1994, versions of the Employee Non-Discrimination Act have been introduced in nearly every Congress, most recently in the House of Representatives in April 2011.

Cole-Schwartz emphasized that is impor-

tant to think of The Index not just in how many perfect ratings, but through the employees affected.

"Through that lens...that really does show how people's lives can be made better by their employers," Cole-Schwartz said.

But with no nationwide ban on all discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, there are still improvements to be made.

Currently, employees and job applicants can legally be discriminated against for their sexual orientation in 29 states and for their gender identity in 34 states.

Minnesota is among 16 total states that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

ING, an Amsterdam-based financial service company, has received a perfect score for 6 out of the 8 years it has taken part in the Index.

Phil Margolis, an ING spokesperson, said the Human Rights Campaign's survey gives the company an opportunity to review its practices.

Margolis said, "As an organization, we want to be a place where people want to come to work every day, to feel comfortable to express their opinion and comfortable to be who they are every day."

ING works with their GLBT employee resource group to best serve every employee, Margolis said.

"[The GLBT employee resource group] is a resource we tap on a regular basis to provide feedback for not only for our internal environment, but for the business itself," Margolis said.

Additionally, the Index has helped ING improve accountability to its customer base, where it can target the GLBT community with existing products, meaning possible financial benefits from taking part in the survey.

Nationally, ING works with the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce and, locally, with the Quorum in Minneapolis to identify the needs and issues concerning their GLBT employees.

The Human Rights Campaign's effort seems to line up with the work of GLBT advocacy groups in Minnesota.



Continued from page 8

being exposed to many of them, frequently. Constantly. Until members of the GLBT community aren't seen as archetypes or all the same, it's hard for the voting body of Minnesota to understand that inclusion is going to be the norm. This is happening. We're not asking you to believe in something that doesn't exist. We're right here.

But, they don't see us.

Aaron and I are now in the city. We left home. Guess what? I daresay that most of us did. It's why we're so comfortable. We have normalcy. We applaud relationships. We walk with people who needed to know who we are—who may not have been so open-minded as we force them to be, simply by existing—but now do.

What I consider to be home is about an hour west of the Twin Cities. My great-grandparents' family farm was in rural Litchfield, my parents raised us in Dassel and Cokato, and Cokato is where I go home to—if you know your geography, yes, that's butts right up against the Sixth District. An hour away.

There are a fair number of us who've left that home, in particular. In the pews of my home church have sat Joe, Executive Direc-

tor of the Aliveness Project; former Minneapolis council member, Scott; and new OutFront Minnesota staff member, Javen, husband of Oby. Another of my oldest classmates and friends is political activist and Facebook sensation, Del. Heck, HGTV's David Bromstad went to my high school. Not only did everyone survive, but everyone returns home on occasion. We don't conspire or contrive any gay agenda while we're here in the city, but perhaps we should. Perhaps our gay agenda should be to go home and be unapologetically normal. Exist. Expose. Simply raise awareness by being there.

It's an important year. There is so much work to be done. Some of it might be more passive than we think. Because, we can't ask someone to vote against something that they don't know is hurting us, because they don't know that we are us.

May you have a wonderful year. I look forward to existing with you and everyone in the GLBT and A community. And I look forward to more applause.

With thanks,

Andy □

Continued from page 52

Project 515 is “fully supportive” of the goals of the Corporate Equality Index and would encourage companies to take part, according to Eric Jensen, communications director for Project 515.

Jensen said The Index's stringent requirements, like taking into account community involvement, provide a big picture of how companies take care of their GLBT employees and customers.

Jensen said there are tangible benefits to being a fair-minded employer.

“The overall value is that we know that companies that treat all of their employees fairly and equally, are able to attract a more diverse and talented employee pool,” Jensen said. “Employees are more happy and they are more productive.”

Jensen said a major value of The Index is that it is a tool to gauge progress in Minnesota and nationwide.

“It is a measure that helps us see that we are moving in the right direction,” Jensen said. “And big companies that are important to the economy are moving us in the right direction.” □



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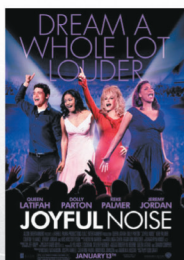
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2012 GMC Terrain

THE QUESTION IS no longer "what is a crossover." It is "what size do you need?"

Since petrol prices scaled up to \$4.00 a gallon nationwide around the first part of 2011, the North American automotive market saw a general shift towards smaller, more efficient vehicles. Benefitting from this downsizing shift is the small crossover segment. If you scour over the sales charts over the past 9-10 months, you will notice the astounding growth in sales of these smaller utility machines.

It is also a field that is getting a bit crowded. On the top of the segment's charts are the Toyota RAV4, Honda CR-V and Ford Escape. These three vehicles practically boosted this segment's profile from the onset. By the latter part of 2012, every manufacturer that sells vehicles in North America will have at least one to offer.

As a byproduct of the growth in small crossover sales, there are now niches within this segment. While Toyota, Honda and Ford rule the more mainstream sections of this class; there are now luxury models available for the more discriminating consumer. These luxury models are experiencing boosts in their sales figures – evidenced by staggering month-to-month increases by the greatly improved BMW X3.

When you have two distinct sub-segments within a market class, no one seems to be concerned about the "middle." After all, the North American market had been divesting away from the middle of the market by eliminating entire brands – Mercury, for example.

The arguments are plenty as to the reasons behind diverging away from the so-called "middle." Still, consumers want something that is not too pretentious... and not too plain, either. The BMW X3 is a wonderful machine, but it can be priced too dear for most families. The Toyota RAV4 may offer three rows of seats, but some consumers complained it's too cheap and plastic for their tastes.

There is good news, however: The "middle" still exists and it lives right in the heart of the small crossover marketplace.



2012 GMC Terrain SLT-2. All Photos by Randy Stern

The GMC Terrain.

For the Professional Grade brand, the Terrain has been GMC's biggest success story of late. Throughout 2011, the Terrain led the growth in sales for the brand across North America. Specifically, the Terrain was cited as the focus in the staggering growth of GMC on the West Coast.

What makes it such a success at this moment? The question is an open ended one. It lends itself to many different answers. It also points to some interesting hypotheses. Ideas ranging from the general shift from larger crossovers to smaller ones, the quest for an upscale small crossover with better value overall to whether this vehicle would fit a lifestyle that balances class with functionality. It is worth exploring the reasons why the Terrain has been experiencing such growth over the course of a year.

Looking back at how this vehicle came to be, the GMC Terrain was planned all along as a companion to the second generation Chevrolet Equinox. This was made easier by the cancellation of the Pontiac Torrent and, to a lesser extent, a very distant cousin – the Suzuki XL-7. It became clear that the GMC variant would not be simply badge-engineered with only a grille to distinguish it from the Chevrolet.

The designers at General Motors went for it. They created a stylish small crossover based on several GMC concepts and



design studies to fuse the Professional Grade theme with a bolder, unapologetic profile.

The result is something that can only be judged by the eye of the beholder. One could dismiss it as plain ugly and very polarizing. I actually see beauty and elegance in the Terrain's styling. It stands out amongst the crowd – just exactly what GMC wanted.

It's not the shape that I'm drawn to. It's the details. The grille texture alone gives a Denali-level feeling to GMC's small crossover. The rear end is contemporary and bold. The wheel arches are squared off, exuding confidence as it goes about its business. The chromed wheels and grille inserts truly gave the Terrain a personality of its own. This is all summed up in one word: Shiny.

You might say the Terrain was loaded with fabulousness reserved for an A-Lister.

The Terrain is not for everyone's eyes.

But, if you're tired of being bored by cookie-cutter crossovers or design elements cribbed from one another's competition – the Terrain could be an improvement to your vision.

The same can be said inside the cabin. The leather upholstery was made for first class travel for five. To contrast either a two-tone Titanium or a monotone Jet Black hue of leather, red stitching is added. Red lighting also adds to the flair of the cabin, but it is also a GMC brand element.

The seats were taut, but very comfortable for long distance driving – as evidenced by my one-way run from Minneapolis down to Chicago. They were decently bolstered for the job and the leather certainly felt durable and supple at the same time. The rear seats were substantial with a couple of adjustments that would surprise most consumers. The seats can be moved back and forth, providing maximum legroom for passengers. The rear seatbacks also recline.

The SLT-2 tester came with the latest infotainment suite provided by GM. The touch screen system includes AM, FM and XM radio, along with the fine navigation graphics that are now part of GM's infotainment package. Rear seat passengers also enjoy individual seatback mounted video screens with a remote control and headphones to enjoy their favorite DVD for the journey ahead. If you do not need the headphones, there are eight Pioneer speakers that would fill the cabin with your favorite soundtrack.

However, you do get a set of buttons on the center stack now commonplace in the latest GM vehicles. Compared to my previous experiences with similar button arrangements, I found this particular arrangement less intuitive overall due to its distance from my driving position. Luckily, there are a few switches on the steering wheel that are better put to use within reach of my fingers.

Access to the cargo area is done with a power-operated liftgate. You can actually set the timing of the opening and closure of the liftgate – or, turn off the power actuation completely. Frankly, I'd rather turn it off, because using the power operation is simply a "show-off" feature that has limited fun appeal after a while. However, if you have kids, and/or a pet and a bunch of things to throw in the cargo hold – this feature is perfect for you.

Under the hood is an engine that has been the bane of most vehicles GM sells: The 3.0litre High Feature V6 with direct

injection and variable valve timing. Since it is no longer found on the Cadillac SRX and Buick LaCrosse, you can only find this 266-horsepower FlexFuel V6 as an option on both the Equinox and the Terrain in the North American market. Connected to the V6 is GM's 6-speed automatic gearbox and, on this example, all-wheel drive.

Though the engine is beyond competent at speed, the 222lb-ft of torque exposed a lag in the lower gears when it had to play catch-up. I also noticed some performance difference while being fed E85 as well as a drop in fuel consumption. A fill-up of regular unleaded gave back some fuel efficiency and a smoother engine feel.

The Terrain's ride was not exactly solid, but it was comfortable enough to manage road imperfections. There was enough dampening of the suspension not to shock anyone on board. The Terrain handled softly, but surely. I noticed a bit of a roll through corners when driven hard. Steering is sharp and tight, which will surprise many who are used to crossovers. Braking is very sure and the action is on point, but there were some moments when it rolled back after a full stop.

In the snow, the all-wheel drive system sends power to all four 18-inch Michelin Latitude tires for the grip needed to get through caked and iced-over roads. Add anti-lock brakes and traction control on top of the front-drive skewed AWD system and you can see why the Terrain (and its brother, the Chevrolet Equinox) have been the best choice amongst GM products this year.

One thing that blipped an alarm when driving the Terrain was the fact that the upright front end created a different kind of blind spot where one needs it – in front of you. If you're driving out in the country or on the freeway, it does not pose a problem. Around town...or at places where there may be obstructions in front of you...the upright front end posed issues for those of us who are used to lower frontal fields of vision.

When I asked people who seen or actually rode in the Terrain what kind of fuel economy they would expect from a V6 version, that could run on both regular petrol and E85 and had all-wheel drive, they figured around 20MPG. In truth, fuel economy varied depending on what was feed into the tank. In all, a perfect mix of unleaded and E85 yielded an economy rating of 18.1MPG.

One can get a basic Terrain SLE with a 2.4litre ECOTEC four-cylinder engine and front wheel drive starting at under \$25,000.



However, to get one with the same specification as the SLT-2 I drove, your bottom line will come to slightly over \$38,000. One would think that would be the price of a Terrain Denali, if one were available. At this point, this is as much Terrain as one could possibly get – save for the Forward Collision Alert and Lane Departure Warning option.

Being somewhat in the middle helps in GMC's favor, but why would you want a Terrain? Is it distinctive enough for you to stand out in a crowd? Is it practical enough for you to carry people, haul a cabin full of stuff northward, tow small boats or attract your next ex-lover?

If you consider every scenario possible, the Terrain provided a comfortable, stylish and entertaining cabin to let the miles go by through Wisconsin and Illinois. Overall, the Terrain turned out to be a nice place to be – even out in the snow. It's nice and shiny, but it has its detractions. Sometimes, those detractions could cancel out a vehicle from consideration. The best way to understand the Terrain is to drive one properly on bad surfaces. Small detractions could be seen as just mere details.

But, if you're one who enjoys standing out in a crowd – and can handle the feedback – the GMC Terrain is your best shot at being noticed.

NOTE: This year will mark the 100th anniversary of the GMC brand - a conglomeration of two truck builders at the turn of the 20th Century that merged into General Motors. Since 1912, the GMC brand appeared on various types of vehicles from a version of the Chevrolet El Camino - the Caballero - to over-the-highway trucks to transit and intercity buses. □

Randy Stern is an automotive writer from Robbinsdale, Minnesota. He can be followed at Victory & Reseda - <http://www.randystern.net>.



The 'Club'



We all have that one place we love to frequent, the space that inspires amuses or calms us. It could be as simple as the coffee shop, a nearby pub, or the public library. Perhaps it's the gym or a beloved restaurant. For us, that place is our club—or, formally The Woman's Club of Minneapolis.

The center of our social, civic and educational lives (as was intended in its founding), the club is our most common haunt and is nearly a second home to us.

With a clubhouse large enough to accommodate most every activity and with knockout views of Loring Park, the Woman's Club offers many opportunities to enrich our lives. Monthly and weekly bulletins, as well as frequent emails, keep us up-to-date on a full range of events, everything from bridge lessons to jazz concerts with Connie Evingson in the Main Lounge. The Club Tuesday Program has been delighting and educating members nearly since the club's founding 110 years ago. A lunch and lecture series, Club Tuesdays are always enlightening and often surprising in their subject matter. If you've ever wondered what "the ladies who lunch" do, this is it. Recent lecture speakers have included bestselling authors, former government officials and local artists.

A good club offers not only activities, but excellent dining as well. Chef Frédéric Bermond, hailing from France, brings his keen eye to everything prepared in the kitchen. Having a French chef in-house guarantees superb presentation as well as excellent flavor for breakfast, lunch, Happy Hour and dinner. Our personal preference is Sunday brunch (with complimentary champagne) on the Loggia, overlooking the park.

Meeting people in a club is never a challenge if you join a committee, and the Woman's Club has a plethora. How else do you

meet your bridge partner? Club members are more apt to ask what committees you serve on than what you do for a living. From volunteering in the Club's circulating library, overseeing the dining room menus, or planning black-tie fundraisers, each committee has its own purpose and focus within the Club. One of the most interesting committees is charged with the preservation and ongoing operations of the Ard Godfrey House; built in 1849, it's the oldest remaining frame home in the Twin Cities. (Visit it on summer weekends; it's at University Avenue and Central Avenue SE, just across the 3rd Avenue bridge from downtown Minneapolis.)

The Club has a full-service theater on the first floor. You may already have had the opportunity to take in a play, concert or lecture in the Assembly Hall. This past holiday season, a riotously funny production of David Sedaris' *Santaland Diaries* fill the hall.

The Woman's Club is not open just women. As two of many male members, the club offers us the opportunity to show support for charitable causes, create lasting friends, learn about ourselves and others and improve our civic life. More comfortable and active than a business club, yet more formal than an athletic country club, the Woman's Club is just the right fit for us. In this new year, why not expand your social circle at the club. We hope to see you there!

Interested in membership or one of the public events? The Woman's Club is located on Loring Park just south of Downtown Minneapolis. ■

The Woman's Club of Minneapolis
410 Oak Grove Street
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Gratitude

“YOU’RE SO BRAVE.”

People have often said that in the two and a half years since I transitioned from male to female. Hearing it is always a mixed bag; yes, it’s ego-feeding, but on the other hand, there’s some irony in being thought of as “brave” for simply living my life as *I need to*. In fact, my customary response is to point out that *real* courage is the soldier who falls on a hand grenade to save his or her comrades. Making the ultimate sacrifice for someone else—now, that’s what I call bravery.

Me? I’m simply surviving, doing what I *have* to do, for *me*. Otherwise, the statistics about transgenders and suicide (a recent survey found that 41% of trans folk attempt suicide) suggest that I might not be here.

Still, not long ago, I found myself telling a group of people they were brave. I had applied for a job as the executive director of a new Minneapolis-based nonprofit. In my cover letter, I disclosed that I am transgender, since I don’t like surprising anyone. A short time later, I found myself in a conference room being interviewed. In between describing my experience as lawyer and past nonprofit board member, I talked about how changing genders has given me a fairly unique perspective; after all, not many people get to live in both genders. In other words, I tried to turn a negative into a positive.

It must have worked. Soon, I was in another conference room, this time being interviewed by a group of seven people—almost all the Board members of this new nonprofit. I walked into the room, took

out a pad of paper, and put on my reading glasses. “Okay, fire away,” I said. For the next hour, I fielded questions about my experience and management philosophy. I described how I would take the organization forward, and how I was passionate about doing well in the world.

“I’m extremely lucky,” I said. “I’ve gotten something that most people don’t get—a second chance, an opportunity for a do-over, both in my professional and personal lives. It’s a true gift.”

I hoped that the interview had gone well, but I’m really bad at gauging those kinds of things. My spirits were buoyed a few days later when I heard that my references were being contacted. “I’m pulling for you,” one reference said. Another—a former client who has known me in both genders—wrote, “I just gave the best damn recommendation for you.”

Shortly after that, I heard from the Board: to my great gratitude, I got the job! My immediate response was to say “Thank you,” and to promise that I’d give it my best. In the next breath, though, I complimented the Board for being brave. After all, it’s not like I’m one-hundred-percent-I’d-never-guess-you’re-transgender-passable; remember, I’ve got that little problem with a deeper voice. More significantly, the nonprofit has nothing to do with LGBT causes or advocacy. In other words, my being transgender wasn’t a factor—good or bad—in the job selection process.

That, in my view, took a measure of guts. Sure, I’d like to believe I’m worth the risk, but still, even in 2012 there’s a chance

people will scratch their heads, which could cause them to think twice about supporting the nonprofit. I want to believe that won’t be the case—particularly in the Twin Cities—but you never know.

When you consider the statistics—there I go again with numbers—it’s even more remarkable that I got the job. According to a study by the National Center for Transgender Equality, 47% of the transgenders surveyed had experienced an adverse job outcome (not hired, fired, or denied a promotion) because of their status as transgender or gender non-conforming. That’s a staggering statistic.

Obviously, things need to change. Thankfully, it looks as if my Board of Directors is at the forefront of that change.

So, as I step forward on my do-over, I tip my hat to a group of straight people for the chance to prove myself as Ellen Krug, human being. I won’t forget how they’ve put their confidence in me.

And, in case you’re wondering, I’m not going anywhere. I’ll continue to write for *Lavender*, too, something else for which I am grateful. ■



Brutal Breakup

Dear Ms. Behavior:

I've just had the worst breakup of my life. She didn't bother to tell me we were breaking up – by the time I saw that her Facebook status was 'single,' several of our mutual friends had posted their condolences on my wall! It was horribly humiliating, not just that she didn't bother telling me in person, but that I was the last person in the world to know. When I told her how upset I was, she blamed me and said that maybe I should check Facebook more often.

I also discovered that she left with all of our sheets and my bunny slippers. I have heard of other brutal breakups lately. Aren't there any ethics or rules about breakup up? Can you offer suggestions?

–BATTERED BY BREAKUP

Dear Battered by Breakup:

Yes, People: how about a little kindness toward someone you once loved, or at least liked. Or lusted after. Or something.

Love inspires the best in most of us, at least for a while. Breaking up can certainly inspire the opposite of that—but it doesn't have to turn exquisitely ugly, does it? Can't we all just get along, even after the romance dies?

The following list of Do's and Don'ts regarding breakups is based on actual letters and complaint received by Ms. Behavior. Let's call this list Guidelines to a Kinder Breakup:

1) If you have the urge to dump your

bf or gf on his or her Facebook wall, don't. That's just plain nasty. (If you happen to be privileged to live in a gay marriage state, this guideline counts double.) Additionally, please remember that it is extremely insensitive to update your facebook status to "single" before informing your partner. While a Facebook posting may seem the most expedient way to live your life, it is kinder to go through the process in real time as if you are real people, even if it feels slow.

2) As tempting as break-up texts may be in their impersonal succinctness, they also suck. And while you might be tempted to see if you can create a haiku text, please remember that your amusement is at the expense of another human being who may be too crushed to admire your creativity. Email is only slightly better. If you are too much of a wuss to break up in person, at least pick up the phone.

3) Once the deed is done, don't turn all of your mutual friends against your ex. There is no reason for this. If you are reading this, you are probably no longer in middle school, so you should have abandoned that sort of behavior along with your acne and orthodontist.

4) Don't take things unless they are indisputably yours. Especially sentimental objects, photographs, bunny slippers, or Hello Kitty mugs.

5) This should not have to be said, but Do not take a dump on your ex's floor. (Yes, this

really happened to someone.)

6) This also shouldn't have to be said, but do not start telling your ex's secrets (and do not get all slippery about what constitutes a secret). You may as well assume that anything intimate or confidential, whether or not it was whispered in your ear in the dark should be kept to yourself. This includes career plans, wishes and desires, family secrets, naked or compromising photos, or any aspirations that have not been made public. It will not only harm your ex, you will ultimately feel badly about the fact that you are so untrustworthy.

7) Also, don't gossip. Don't tell friends or acquaintances private information, even if it's juicy. For example, if your ex only gets off if you climb through the window wearing a mask and take her forcibly after calling her a dirty slut, whose business is this? If you have a video of your ex doing something unnatural with a fruit, vegetable, or neighbor, keep it in the drawer or return it to your ex.

8) Don't cut the sex toys into tiny pieces and leave them in the bed. While there is not yet an adequate state-sponsored recycling plan for dildos, you do have less-violent alternatives. If your ex also doesn't want them (and why would she?) you can throw them out, put them out for collection when your city collects toxic waste, or clean them thoroughly and donate them to The Salvation Army. □

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Sleeping with Mrs. Bachmann

I HAVE A terrible confession. Every woman I have ever slept with has been a Republican. Even if they wouldn't admit it. I always manage to suss it out. They stare wistfully at protesters at abortion clinics or I find pictures of Ronald Reagan tucked in their wallets. Sadly, I was born and raised in the suburbs and have a sentimental attachment to helmet-haired, BMW-driving, bridge-playing matrons who vote only for white men with easy-to-pronounce surnames.

But that's not my terrible confession. Here it is: I am sleeping with Michelle Bachman. Yes, that's right. Michelle Bachmann sleeps with me each night. And I love her.

OK, it's not the real Michelle Bachmann, but it is one of her disciples. Her name is Livia and she's a miniature schnauzer. She shares Bachmann's fuzzy features and long eyelashes, as well as her homophobia.

I got Livia and her idiot brother Fredo from the same litter three years ago, and Livia has been trying to turn me straight ever since. Anytime a girl comes anywhere near me, Livia weasels her way between us, blocking any intimacy. She literally creates a dog wall to prevent any contact. In bed, she sleeps between my girlfriend and me, lying flush against my side and extending her legs against my girlfriend to prevent any accidental touching during the night.

When we attempt to share a kiss, Livia throws herself at us until we're forced to stop. We have to lock her out of the bedroom when we have sexy time. And she responds by hurling herself at the door repeatedly until we stop our lesbian antics.

"How did you manage to raise a right-wing conservative dog?" my girlfriend asked, not nearly as concerned about this issue as she should be. Although she votes for all the right people, she's a business owner who gets all misty each time the phrase "tax relief for the wealthy" is evoked by Fox commentators. So, she's not nearly as alarmed as I am that I have a Republican pet.

Recently, I took Livia to a trainer to help break her of her obstructionist ways.

"What's the problem," the gruff lady trainer with hair the color of algae.

"She won't let me have sex," I responded.

"And, what's the matter with that?" she said. "I haven't had sex since my hysterectomy. I don't miss it. Sounds to me like she's just being sensible. Get out of bed! Go take a walk!"

"I'm just worried that she's homophobic," I said. "Anytime my girlfriend comes within touching distance, Livia, squirms between us. She's very sweet about it, but she's also insistent. We are not allowed to get anywhere near each other when she's around."

The trainer, who obviously hadn't had or wanted human contact since infancy, rolled her eyes at my base desires. Then she took me through Livia's daily routine in order to determine the root of the problem.

I told her that the dogs are left alone when I go to work and that I leave the TV on for them so they don't get lonely. "Come to think of it," I said, having a mighty revelation, "the channel is usually on Fox News when I get home. Could Livia be changing the channel once I leave the house?"

The trainer and I agreed that this was the problem. She gave me a piercing whistle to use whenever Michelle Bachman comes on the screen. "Aversion therapy," the trainer said.

Will it work? Too soon to tell. But this morning, Livia chewed up my conservative dress pumps, forcing me to wear Birkenstocks to work. Perhaps her way of finally giving approval to my lesbian lifestyle? □

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A Movement for Wholeness In A Fragmented World. 2201 First Ave. S. Minneapolis, MN (612) 870-1868 www.fccminneapolis.org

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Donkey	Hot Shirt-less Man	FREE SPACE	Crazy Lady on the Street	Ice Fishing House
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Saint Vanity

OUR EYES OPEN to a teenage angel sitting at the edge of his keeper's bed, hunched elbow-to-knee, watching the city beneath him. His wings are vast, mighty, ethereal; they belie his small, emaciated body.

He cries and the city melts in his tears, but his face remains expressionless. He gazes through his keeper's window empty, statuesque. Eyes veiled in shadow, he does not blink. His tears reflect the moonlight.

A choral *Requiem* in D minor fills the bedroom.

"What the hell are you listening to?" asks a voice from the dark. His keeper.

The bedroom lights switch on, and the angel does not respond.

"Baby?" his keeper asks. "What's wrong?"

The man kneels before the angel and looks at him with compassion. He cups the angel's head in his palm and brushes away the tears. "It's OK, baby boy. I'm here."

Halloween 2005. I'm sitting on the edge of his bed wearing angel wings and glitter. Cliché, I know. But he enjoys it.

"Mama is dead," the voice on the line told me moments earlier. My muscles gave way and the phone slipped from my hand and hit the floor, breaking on impact. My grandmother was the string tying me together. I needed her. And she was gone.

Now he's kneeling in front of me, looking at me with those wretched eyes, pretending he cares. I'd normally run to him for comfort.

I'd invite him to join me, to lay a while and hold me. Not tonight.

I stand and walk away without acknowledging him. I lock myself in the bathroom, where a stereo plays *Requiem* in D minor, K.626—1. Introitus: *Requiem*. I listened to it to help me into character as I put on my costume.

I look at my underweight frame in the mirror. I'm boney. Too boney. I caress my ribs with my fingertips, sending chills through my body. I lean in to study my face. My hipbones grind the porcelain sink. It hurts.

My eyes are as brown as they've always been. My lips, just as full. My hair, just as brunette. But I'm not looking at myself. I'm looking at something else.

I lose my breath and am suddenly I'm lightheaded. What am I doing?

I starve myself to keep bone-thin. That's how he likes me. That's how my friends like themselves. That's how I should be. So I am.

I'm wearing glitter and angel wings—little else—because men will like me this way. Right?

I realize in this moment that I'm consumed by appealing to everyone else. It's expected. Who am I to challenge who I should be? If I want to be successful in life, I must be loved. And in order to be loved, I must give up myself.

I make fun of people who are socially

awkward in these days. I laugh when people aren't dressed well. I bully people who are perfectly beautiful. I'm part of the Cult of Saint Vanity. Cold-hearted and ruthless.

My grandmother's death puts things in perspective. She lived by the adage, "If you don't pay my bills, I don't give a DAMN what you think about me." She was loved because she was strong. Because she was herself.

And what would she think of me now? Standing in front of a mirror belonging to my boyfriend who abuses me, starving for food and attention, desperate to be loved, insecure beyond measure. When all I'd really like to be doing is, well, anything else.

So things change tonight. A *Requiem* in one ear, my boyfriend banging on the bathroom door in the other, I remove my wings. I am no longer an Angel of Vanity. I am Justin, and I am Justin alone.

Saint Vanity is a contagious disease prominent among youth. Stereotypical of the young gay community. Symptoms: perpetual dissatisfaction, cruel thoughts or actions toward others, undue judgment toward oneself, affinity to the abusive. Cause: insecurity, pressure from one's peers or perceived loved ones, absence of courage. Prognosis: loneliness. Treatment: admitting your mirror no longer reflects you, but someone else; then, opening your eyes. ■

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